

MINISTERING TO THE OPPRESSED WOMEN IN  
THE DISTRICT OF KALAHANDI, ORISSA STATE, INDIA

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## DEDICATION

To the Gospel of Jesus Christ and to the oppressed women of India.

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## **ABSTRACT**

In Chapter 1, “The Problem and its Background”, the author has introduced the major problems of female oppression as found in Kalahandi of Orissa State. The historical factors that contributed to the problems were examined and assumptions towards a change through the ministry of the gospel were made and a methodology of approach was drawn in this chapter. Chapter 2 discusses the theological framework with justification for doing such a ministry and has argued that God is concerned for the care of the oppressed, especially of the women, as they are each individual, unique and special in the eyes of God. In Chapter 3 under Literature Review, the author discusses such areas as the historical process of Brahmanicalization, women and oppression, religious seclusion, dowry demand and related killings, female infanticide, sacrifice and selling of female children, education deprivation, child marriage, consecrated temple prostitution, hard labor and physical torture, and enforced husband worship and slavery. In Chapter 4 under Project Design and Implementation, a study done with an Intervention Group of ten women is detailed and the outcomes recorded. It draws a conclusion that when each woman is led to an awareness that she is an individual, unique and special in the eyes of God she gains self respect which is perceived by her peers for a change, especially a spiritual and social change leading to freedom from female oppression.

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## **CHAPTER 1 - THE PROBLEM AND ITS BACKGROUND**

### **Introduction and Problems**

Newspapers and magazines almost everyday report countless cases of women who are oppressed all over India, especially in the State of Orissa. This researcher has noticed that a clear and extreme kind of oppression of women exists in Kalahandi District. Therefore, the researcher chose to do this study in Junagarh, which is the epicenter of Kalahandi civilization. Although all the types of oppression are beyond the scope of this study, it attempts to identify the prevalence of different prominent types of oppression and their settings, while it also attempts to see what the ministry of the gospel would bring towards a change. Those problems identified as important for this study are: the dowry demand system, enforced women illiteracy, female infanticide, female feticide, female child selling, enforced hard labor on women and female children, child marriage and solitary widowhood, enforced husband-worship and slavery, and consecrated temple prostitution.

In India, the bride's parents are often unable to meet the groom's demands of dowry. A great many number of fathers want to keep their inheritance for their sons, their daughters are treated as unwanted burdens in their husbands' homes, and neglected by their own families. This leads to harsh words, physical torture and even murder by the groom's family. Too often the bride commits suicide, as she is unable to stand the torture. The justice system is often found on the culprit's side, since it is normatively accepted that a woman has no rights. From the fear of having to give dowry rises evils such as infanticide, feticide, female child selling and forcing women into illiteracy by prohibiting their education. These problems are detailed under Chapter 3.

Women are discouraged from basic education. A woman's function according to norms and practices is to bear any number of male children, raise them and serve and feed the men of her family. Barrenness is a curse. A woman who bears only female children is cursed as well. The society by its silence approves disposing of such women. A virtuous woman brings forth male children who are indisputable heirs to the husband's inheritance and to the strength of the society. The Brahmanical scripts repeatedly voice their opinion that women are inherently inferior and evil by nature. Only among Christians are women shown some respect in these areas. For the purpose of subjugating women into slavery, illiteracy is still enforced on them, especially in the Kalahandi district. Aside from high caste women there is seldom a girl or woman who knows how to read or write her own language.

Female infanticide is almost daily news in Kalahandi District. There, most everyday, the papers send news detailing incidents of female infanticide. A female child of 2 days old was buried alive recently in this state by her grand father. In July 2007, the government intervened and legal proceedings are in progress. Such situations are created because of the demand for dowry.

Ultrasound is a new technology in India and is often used for female feticide even at the final stage of pregnancy. Although this practice is illegal, some doctors are becoming millionaires doing female feticide. Female fearing parents rush to hospitals with money to destroy female fetuses. Some husbands and their families search for palm readers and black magicians to find out the sex of the fetus and to destroy the female ones.

In this district, children are being sold without any investigation or oversight. From a few days old to few years old, children mostly girls, are being sold. For human sacrifice to their gods they use boys and girls. But most of the time parents sell their unwanted female children for sacrifice to their goddess Kali.

Most of the men here, especially of the suppressed class, are noted to be idle, spending their time playing cards, socializing, drinking and going to the cinema, while their wives and young daughters are forced into hard labor from early morning till late evening. A woman has to give all the money she earned that day to the man of the house and he spends it as he likes. Some women and girls from the suppressed class go into the forests and collect firewood, tendu leaves to make indigenous cigarettes, grass for cattle, leaves to make disposable plates for hotels, etc. They sell these items in the village markets and buy their food items for the day. Women are the real bread winners in this area. They do all kinds of hard labor including carrying heavy loads on their heads, such as boulders and bricks. They do it because it is forced on them by men. Women here are like birds in the hunter's basket. For this reason illiteracy is enforced on women. A woman here is not permitted to know more than what is enforced on her as service to her family and society in the form of religious rites.

In a group of thirteen women studied here at one point, ten were married when they were as young as 9 to 14 years old. They do not remember their wedding dates. Four of them said that they did not come to their husbands' houses until after they came to puberty. Some said that they were playing with other children in their husband's house during this time and did not know what was going on. Most of them said they were raped or forced into intimacy by their husbands and were very bitter in the early part of their married life. All of them had their first child born before their sixteenth year of life. Ten out of thirteen were illiterate and never went to school.

Life in widowhood is a painful and cursed one among the widow's own people. This kind of widowhood is being practiced among high caste people here. Some women jump into their husband's funeral pyre to avoid the cursed life after his death.

Husband worship and slavery is a part of a woman's life here, and it is enforced on them as part of their religious traditions. The Hindu scripture has commanded to

wash their husband's feet and even their whole body and drink that water as holy water. Wives should worship their husbands as gods. Women should follow their husband's word to the letter. She will attain a high place by serving her husband, and serving her husband is the only duty of a wife.

The practice of consecrated temple prostitution still continues here. The girls are consecrated as soon as they are born to be wives of the temple gods, and sent to the temples when they turn 9, then prostituted by priests and men. This practice is still common in Kalahandi district. Priests are treated as Devans (gods' representatives) and the girls (Dhasis) are to serve and satisfy them. These innocent girls and women become victims to the priests and the men visitors of the temple and monasteries. They abuse them physically and mentally and then they become like husk chewed up, spat out, and trampled down.

So it is impossible for an individual or a group, especially women, to get out of this religious bondage. The system as mentioned above has been in force for thousands of years. In this evil system, women are expected to pass on these traditions to the future generations as well without any break in the system. The female oppression system was carefully inscribed into the caste system devised by the Aryan conquerors. More details of the problems are given under the Literature Review in Chapter 3.

### **Analyzing the Historical Factors That Contributed to the Present Condition**

The existence of the problem of female oppression in the Kalahandi district of Orissa state, as in other parts of the state and of the country, has a history that is as old as the existence of Aryans in India. The system of women oppression in the land is tied to a system of life, death and rebirth which comprises the Brahminic religion. With the application of the very word "Hindu" the Brahminical philosophy with its apologists claim exclusive ownership of India, denying the right of other religious people to "own" the

land. The word “Hindu,” is a foreign dialect to India. “Indu” is the Indian word. “Hindu” is a Persian word: it means simply Indian. Hinduism is thus the ‘\_\_ism’ of the “Indian people”.<sup>1</sup> The word “Hindu” was being used by the invading Aryan people also. The original Indians had named the ever-flooding Indus River “Indu,” meaning eternal, and the land and the people of the land “Indu land” and “Indu people,” respectively.

The initial Aryan influx, from the available documents, is believed to be sometime in the Eighth Century B.C. Before subduing the Harappan Dravidians of the Indus valley, for about five hundred years, the Aryans conducted wars of invasion against them from the time they entered the Indukush, which is Kabul in the present-day Afghanistan.

These Aryans constitute the following three groups of people.

- i. Mittanis who migrated from the ancient country of Mittani in Asia Minor or Modern Turkey.
- ii. Hittites from the ancient Hittite Kingdom in Asia Minor.
- iii. A calf worshiping barbarian group who were wanderers with their women and cattle in the Mediterranean regions. They eventually migrated to India carrying the name Brahma, and joined the other two groups at the Indukush. They participated in waging war against the Harappans.

Concerning the time period of their invasion R.C. Zachner says:

The only datable inscription concerning these remote times comes not from India or even from Iran, but from a Turkish village in Eastern Anatolia called Boghaz Koy. Here was discovered the text of a treaty between the Hittite King Shuppiluliumash and the King of Mittani, Mattiwaza. The name of the latter is Indo-Iranian, and he was a worshipper of Indo-Iranian gods. This treaty dates from earlier half of the fourteenth century and in it are mentioned four gods (in a slightly differing form) prominent in the Vedas (Brahminical scripture) – Varuna, Mitra, Indra, and the Nasatyas. The presence of this Indo – Iranian people in Eastern Anatolia who spoke a dialect apparently rather more Indic than Iranian has been thought by some to prove that the Indo-Iranian tribes were still on the move towards their final destinations in the fourteenth century B.C. If this were so, the Aryan eruption into India could scarcely

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<sup>1</sup> R. C. Zachner, *Hinduism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1966), 1.

have taken place earlier than the twelfth century B.C. It seems, however, more likely that the Mittani were a separate branch of the Indo-Iranian group which had split itself off from the main body at an early date; and if this is so we are still reduced to guesswork as to when the Aryans entered India.<sup>2</sup>

The Female Oppression system was carefully inscribed into the caste system devised by these Aryan conquerors. This system includes other oppressed segments of the population such as the “Dalits”, who are untouchable or outcaste according to the Brahmanical caste division. This division system was then fashioned into a religion by the Brahministic writers of the Vedas, or religious scripture, which may have been initially penned while they were still in the Indukush. The Female Oppression theory is a complex philosophy, as is the philosophy of oppression through caste and outcaste divisions. It quelled dissent within the population for over a couple of millennia. It allowed a few, namely those of the priestly and Aryan Brahmin classes, who claim to be direct descendants of Brahma, to claim total ownership over all of India in the name of a religion. It allowed them to physically and mentally subdue and enslave the people, encroach upon their land and rule over them with their “Divide and Rule” philosophy. This religious system, known as Hinduism, is practically an Aryan invention. There existed no such system of artificial division in the land of the Indus River people previously. It is the Brahminical philosophy of rebirth that connects the oppression philosophies of the religion. It induces a woman to be the absolute slave of a man and the system. Women are expected to pass it on to the future generations without any break in the system.

It is dangerous and difficult for someone to make an attempt to deliver women from oppression in these lands. This religiously oppressive system has become part of everyone’s core belief. For example, as a low caste or an outcaste man (Dalit) bows before a high caste Brahmin, so a woman must defer to her husband as master of her

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 14–15.



life in order to be reborn as a higher order human. Only a Brahmin man can enter heaven. Everyone aspires to be reborn as a Brahmin man, so everyone complies with what is expected of them.

Through this philosophical system everyone has a sense of hope that if they follow the rules of the system, they too can achieve the pinnacle of human achievement, which is, to be born a Brahmin man. With it come wealth and prestige and power. It is best not to upset the apple cart. As with the Dalit, a woman too can reach Nirvana, which brings ultimate peace and joy, if she stays perfectly obedient to her husband. In this manner, the Brahmin man propagates his own preeminent place in Indian society. His prominence is ensured for all time. It is perhaps the most cleverly fashioned form of population management and control ever devised.

The oppression of women varies from state to state and from community to community. Orissa is an ancient state which was prominently known as “Kalinga” where Jainism had once flourished, “under Karakandu, the great Jaina King who ruled in the second half of the eighth century B.C.”<sup>3</sup> “Karakandu was a great patron king of Jainism not only in Kalinga but also in other states where his royal friends were ruling.”<sup>4</sup> Again, “Kalinga under Ashoka, king of the third Century B.C., witnessed the fervent activities of the Buddhist missionaries for propagation of Dharma.”<sup>5</sup>

This is a land full of temples and superstitions. Both Jainism and Buddhism that resisted the Brahmanical casteism and its oppression theories have been effectively eradicated from here. The system of oppression is active, and is rigorously enforced in this land especially in this very backward district, Kalahandi, which was a sovereign Kingdom under the Naga Dynasty.

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<sup>3</sup> N. K. Sahu, P. K. Mitra and J. K. Sahu, *History of Orissa* (Cuttack: Nalanda, 1996), 28.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

D.B Mishra, in his concise History of Orissa writes:

The rule of the Naga Dynasty was founded in Kalahandi (present Kalahandi District) towards 1300 A.D...Their capital was at Kalahandi Nagara, which was identified with present Junagada ('Junah' in old parlance means old and 'gada' means fort).<sup>6</sup>

Mishra again writes, "In 1849 Cholera broke out at the capital Kalahandinagara (Junagarh). So Fateh Narayan (The King) shifted his capital to Bhandeswar (presently known as Bhavanipatna)."<sup>7</sup>

This area constitutes a high percentage of low caste and outcaste people who are extremely poor. The outcastes are people who are out of the caste system, and called the untouchable Avarnas. They are not counted among the caste divisions, because Brahmanism does not consider them human. Female Oppression is highly prevalent here, as they are considered just above outcastes. M.D. David writes,

[T]here have been slaves in many societies since ancient times but no society had treated its fellow human as untouchables the way it was done under the Hindu Social System...the system of untouchability in India that dehumanized the Dalits was religious.<sup>8</sup>

### **Content**

Kalahandi is one of the upper western districts of Orissa State where the majority of the people are from hill tribes and low caste Sudras. Female oppression exists in this most backward part of Orissa, more than in most other parts of India. Since Junagarh was the capital city of the Kalahandi Civilization for five and a half centuries, a study focusing here was felt ideal. Some say that hope for a change, from oppression to awareness and empowerment in the women of Kalahandi is difficult and the possibility of a release from their oppression is remote.

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<sup>6</sup> D. B. Mishra, *Concise History of Orissa* (New Delhi: Kalyani Publishers, 2005), 244.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 247.

<sup>8</sup> M.D. David, *Indian Church History Review* (Bangalore: Dharmaram College, 2004), 112.

This research is the first of its kind here, and therefore, there is no availability of materials to be collected for the purpose of this study from any prior studies. This study is an evaluative research to find out the possibility of enhancing self empowerment in the women here through the delivery of spiritual care. This researcher believes that self awareness and self empowerment can be brought about in these oppressed women through their self recognition that they are each individual, unique and special creations in the eyes of God. The researcher wishes to convey to an intervention group of women that they are highly valued and have a respected place in the order that God has created for them in the universe. This eventually can open up opportunities to evangelize to others in their communities as well. This may happen as their curiosity about the intervention group's transformation grows. Her hope is that this study will be a first step in the development of self empowerment in these oppressed women. This thesis is written under the following chapters:

- i. The Problem and Its Setting
- ii. Theological Framework
- iii. Literature Review
- iv. Project Design
- v. Outcomes

### **Assumption**

The researcher's assumption is that when a woman achieves a sense of self awareness and self empowerment (in this study, through spiritual enlightenment), she will view herself with self esteem and self respect. The society of her peers will perceive an individual with ability and accomplishment. Her hope is that if a few women could collectively gain this outlook, women who were not in the intervention group will take note and ask about what brought about the process of change in the intervention group.

Perhaps it will eventually create a process of social change in attitudes and behavior towards women. This in turn would keep them from further oppression. A common sense of awareness and awakening will be initiated among the general population of women, which can have a spill-over effect. Of course, this transformation should be consistent with the cultural context of the women's society, so as not to risk a back lash to a perceived threat. This can be accomplished by a call to service and love in the intervention group that will be valued by their families and villages, while empowering the women with a sense of self worth.

This thesis project is limited to an evaluation of the problem and an initial development of a program to address the issues. However, this researcher intends to proceed on to prepare a five year plan, because she believes that a clear and noticeable change may or may not be brought about in the society in one year due to its existing social structure with its socio- religious stigmas and militancy against Christianity. A broad scale change may take even more than five years, which goes beyond the scope of this thesis project.

### **Project Design**

This study is to identify if a noticeable change can be affected in the realm of spiritual awareness and cultural self empowerment through the gospel of Christ in the women of Kalahandi. I will focus the research in Junagarh. This can be accomplished through the rendering of appropriate and effective spiritual care. Promoting awareness and empowerment may be achieved through the following tools.

- i. Assessing the emotional and spiritual needs of the intervention group through a questionnaire that can be administered by an evangelist or a development worker. This questionnaire can also assess the women's sense of self esteem and self worth.

- ii. Observing the women's day to day routine and keeping notes on their social patterns as part of field work for four weeks.
- iii. Counseling each woman with qualified workers about her daily routines and social stressors by people understanding their cultural context over a period of four weeks.
- iv. Beginning to engage the women about their spiritual hunger and how to make that whole, and then educating the women on God's love for each unique woman over the course of four months.
- v. Administering a follow up questionnaire with a view to assessing their sense of worth following the initial intervention.
- vi. Making periodic visits to the individuals involved in this study in order to make an initial evaluation of the problem. Then, the ministry will be continued longitudinally and evaluated periodically with a data yield which would be invaluable about techniques that can make inroads into this vulnerable population.
- vii. Utilizing additional forms of resources and supplemental support for the intervention group that may include home meetings such as prayer cells, women's fellowship and Bible Study, and Church meetings. The ministry's pastors, evangelists and developmental workers will be made available to the women for encouragement and for building up self esteem and self awareness. Extra resources may be planned if and when a need is felt during the process of study.

### **Parameters of the Project**

The parameter for this project is to conduct an initial study in Junagarh which is a town with tribals, low castes and high castes people using the following resources for data collections.

- i. Interviews with pertinent persons
- ii. Questionnaires
- iii. Reading of text books and journals
- iv. Governmental records
- v. Newspapers and year books
- vi. Maps and charts

## **CHAPTER 2 - THEOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK**

The oppressed are people who are suppressed and in anguish due to the actions of other human beings or powers who wish to satisfy their compulsive desire for more wealth, power or glory. Female oppression is the oppression of one sex by another for the purpose of retaining power or position. The researcher wants to study theological positions on oppression in the following areas:

- i. God on the oppression of Israelites in Egypt
- ii. The restraints on oppression in the Ten Commandments
- iii. God's concerns for the oppressed in the Old Testament
- iv. God commands justice for the oppressed
- v. The woman at creation
- vi. Christ's position towards the oppressed
- vii. Jesus Christ and women
- viii. The marriage mystery and command of God
- ix. The New Testament position on oppression
- x. The place of oppression in the Messianic Kingdom
- xi. Women in heaven like angels

### **God on the Oppression of Israelites in Egypt**

God remembered His covenant to the Israelites. And the Lord said: "I have surely seen the oppression of My people, who are in Egypt, and have heard their cry

because of their task masters, for I know their sorrows. So I have come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians...”<sup>1</sup>

The children of Israel groaned because of the bondage placed upon them by the Egyptian king. They cried out to God and their cry went up to Him. He remembered His covenant with their forefathers and acknowledged their difficulties and distress. He decided to deliver them from their oppressor. God called Moses from the burning bush at Horeb to be the savior of His people and sent him back to Egypt to deliver the oppressed children of Israel. “Now therefore, behold, the cry of the children of Israel has come to Me, and I have also seen the oppression with which the Egyptians oppress them. Come now, therefore, and I will send you to pharaoh that you may bring My people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt.”<sup>2</sup>

When the cry of the oppressed went to God, He came to deliver them and ordained Moses to lead them. The God of the oppressed demands that all who believe and worship Him should stand for the cause of the oppressed. God, who is the creator of all, is concerned for His creation, especially those who have no one to defend or protect.

Daniel Jones Muthunayagam writes:

In the Bible God’s creative and liberative Action is portrayed with verbs that point to His active involvement of seeing, hearing, speaking, coming, responding, creating, delivering, etc. This is very conspicuous in Exodus 3: 7-8. The purpose of God’s seeing and hearing the out cry of the people is to bring out, to deliver and to liberate those whose cries have reached Him.<sup>3</sup>

Not only did God decide to deliver the oppressed children of God, but He also punished the oppressors. He made the oppressing Egyptians understand that Yahweh is the God who stands for the cause of the oppressed. He tried the oppressing Egyptians harshly

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<sup>1</sup> Exodus 3:7-8a.

<sup>2</sup> Exodus 3:9-10.

<sup>3</sup> Daniel Jones Muthunayagam, “*Biblical hermeneutics in the context of the life experience of Dalits and Burakumin communities*”, Bangalore Theological Forum, Vol. xxxvii, No.1, 10.



with ten different kinds of plagues. When they sought to destroy the Israelites and pursued them even to the Red Sea, God did not tolerate it. He humbled the Pharaoh, the oppressor, by causing his army to sink into the Red Sea. This gave the Pharaoh the message that Yahweh does not like it when one group of human beings oppresses another.

Then the Lord said to Moses, ‘Stretch out your hand over the Sea, that the waters may come back upon the Egyptians, on their chariots, and on their horsemen.’ And Moses stretched out his hand over the sea; and when the morning appeared, the sea returned to its full depth, while the Egyptians were fleeing into it. So the Lord overthrew the Egyptians in the midst of the sea. Then the waters returned and covered the chariots, the horsemen, and all the army of Pharaoh that came into the sea after them. Not so much as one of them remained’.<sup>4</sup>

The God of Israel, Yahweh, hears not only the cry of Israel in their distress, but He hears the cries of all who are oppressed. The Psalmist says, “The Lord executes righteousness and justice for all who are oppressed.”<sup>5</sup>

Moses was sent to deliver the oppressed Israelites with the power and authority of God. So the Lord said to Moses: “See, I have made you as God to Pharaoh, and Aaron your brother shall be your prophet”.<sup>6</sup> God Almighty met the oppressor through Moses with His majestic power and executed judgment on the oppressor of His people. He sent ten plagues including the death plague. God also hardened the heart of Pharaoh. God’s purpose is not only His judgment of Pharaoh, but also the manifesting of His power to save His people so that His name might be proclaimed in all the earth. God said to Moses: “But indeed for this purpose I have raised you up, that I may show My power in you, and that My name may be declared in all the earth.”<sup>7</sup> Thus the Lord God

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<sup>4</sup> Exodus 14:26-28.

<sup>5</sup> Psalm 103:6.

<sup>6</sup> Exodus 7:1.

<sup>7</sup> Exodus 9:16.

delivered Israel triumphantly from the oppression of the Egyptians and taught them the lesson that he is against oppression.

### **The Restraints on Oppression in the Ten Commandments**

The last five of the Commandments deal with the interpersonal relationships and reveal God's desire for His people not to oppress others. These commandments state:

You shall not murder.  
You shall not commit adultery.  
You shall not steal.  
You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.  
You shall not covet your neighbor's wife, nor his male servant, nor his female servant, nor his ox, nor his donkey, nor anything that is your neighbor's.<sup>8</sup>

God has strictly prohibited oppression against one another. He has given specific law in order for every one to live peacefully within their areas. These laws protect people from oppression. Although the first four commandments are concerned with man's responsibility towards his creator, and the fifth one is with a promise of blessing for honoring the father and mother, the remaining five commandments restrain human beings from oppressing each other.

The sixth commandment reads, "You shall not murder." With this command God restrains one or a group of individuals from taking away the life of another. It is because the life of a human being came from God. Since it is given by God, He only has the right to take it away. Moreover, man's image itself is that of the Creator God which itself restrains a person from putting his/her hands upon another person.

The right to live is given to every individual by his/her creator. None other has been permitted to interfere with God-given life. Murdering another person can also be seen as robbing an individual's life, which puts all his/her family's and relatives' lives at

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<sup>8</sup> Exodus 20:13-17.

risk of being humbled in oppression. Therefore, God, by the sixth commandment, restrains every one from murdering.

The seventh commandment, stated in Exodus 20, restrains everyone from committing adultery. The Lord instituted marriage in the Garden of Eden and allowed man and woman to live a married life in harmony, by being faithful to each other. He wanted them to live as a family in unity and peace. He added the function of multiplication and of filling the earth with godly generations. So, "God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. Then God blessed them, and God said to them, be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it...."<sup>9</sup>

Thus, God instituted marriage, giving man and woman the right to lead family lives of their own with their husbands, wives and children without outside interference. Therefore, He does not permit any one to put asunder what He Himself instituted and united. Furthermore, this unity between husband and wife signifies the spiritual unity required of God between God Himself and the man He created in His own image. The fundamental principle here is that God will take care of His created, and mankind will give their glory and honor through worship and adoration demonstrating faithfulness to Him alone. Any violation against it is spiritual adultery that God resists to the utmost and punishes to the extent of discarding.

For although they knew God, they neither glorified Him as God nor gave thanks to Him, but their thinking became futile and their hearts were darkened instead. Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for image made to look like mortal man and bird and animals and reptiles. Therefore, God gave them over in the sinful desires of their heart to sexual impurity for the degrading of their bodies with one another.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Genesis 1:27-28.

<sup>10</sup> Romans 1:21-24.

Physical adultery is a worldly shadow of spiritual adultery which violates the required faithfulness between a man and his wife. An attempt to defeat the divine institution of marriage through adultery, ultimately leads to the mutual spiritual oppression of husband and wife, thus leading to the oppression and agonized life of others in the family, especially children. Therefore, the Lord restrained adultery by law, protecting all concerned from impending oppression, both emotional and spiritual.

With the eighth commandment, you shall not steal, God gives all people a right and freedom to own and possess his own property. Man is not permitted to rob anything that the Lord God has permitted another person to own. Stealing or robbery is deprivation of what one owns. Being deprived of owning one's own property throws him/her into various degrees of anguish and agony which is oppression to the deprived person as well as to his/her family or beneficiary. Therefore, God restrains people from inflicting this kind of oppression upon another person. The Scripture says, "If a man steals an ox or sheep, and slaughters it or sells it, he shall restore five oxen for an ox and four sheep for a sheep."<sup>11</sup> Again "If the theft is certainly found alive in his hand, whether it is an ox or donkey or sheep, he shall restore double."<sup>12</sup> The Bible says, "He who kidnaps a man and sells him, or if he is found in his hand, shall surely be put to death."<sup>13</sup> In Deuteronomy, "If a man is found kidnapping any of his brethren of the children of Israel, and mistreats him or sells him, then that kidnapper shall die, and you shall put away the evil from among you."<sup>14</sup> The God of Israel is warning people to avoid oppressing each other in whatever manner. Where He has shown us freedom, He expects that we likewise show grace.

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<sup>11</sup> Exodus 22:1.

<sup>12</sup> Exodus 22:4.

<sup>13</sup> Exodus 22:16.

<sup>14</sup> Deuteronomy 24:7.

The ninth commandment warns against false testimony or witness, which was common then as it is now. This is an action planned and executed intentionally by one or more oppressors in order to oppress by stealing the rights of another person or another group of persons. The Jewish High Priest and associates brought false witness against Jesus Christ by the intentional misrepresentation of His words in order to execute Him.

The Scripture says:

Now the Chief Priests, the elders, and all the Council sought false testimony against Jesus to put him to death, but found none. Even though many false witnesses came forward, they found none. But at last two false witnesses came forward and said, This fellow said, I am able to destroy the temple of God and to build it in three days.<sup>15</sup>

The Jewish zealots also brought false witnesses against Stephen to stone him to death.

Then they secretly induced men to say, 'We have heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses and God'. And they stirred up the people, the elders, and the scribes; and they came upon him, seized him, and brought him to the council. They also set up false witnesses who said, 'This man does not cease to speak blasphemous words against this holy place and the law; For we have heard him say that this Jesus of Nazareth will destroy this place, and change the customs which Moses delivered to us.'<sup>16</sup>

The God of Israel repeated His restraints to His people. God said to them, "You shall not circulate false reports. Do not put your hand with the wicked to be an unrighteous witness, you shall not follow a crowd to do evil; nor shall you testify in a dispute so as to turn aside after many to pervert justice."<sup>17</sup>

The tenth commandment warns, "You shall not covet your neighbor's house, you shall not covet your neighbor's wife, nor his male servant, nor his ox, nor his donkey, nor anything that is your neighbor's."<sup>18</sup> Covetousness is "to want ardently, especially,

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<sup>15</sup> Matthew 26:59-62.

<sup>16</sup> Acts 6:11-14.

<sup>17</sup> Exodus 23:1-2.

<sup>18</sup> Exodus 20:13-17.

something that another person has.”<sup>19</sup> This is bad behavior. To have an intense or burning desire to have or enjoy another individual's possession is sinful. Whether it is another person's wealth, wife, maid servant, male servant, ox, donkey, or whatever else it may be, it certainly involves oppression on the part of the party that becomes victim of somebody's covetousness. God has placed a restraint over lustful compulsions. Enjoying something that does not belong to oneself is abhorrent to God, as long as the Lord has given the right to own and enjoy one's own possessions. The flaming desire for another's belonging will lead to the sin of stealing or committing adultery. Such desires lead to the oppression of theft, adultery or murder. A husband is precious to his wife and a wife is precious to her husband; a mother is an expensive thing for her children; a donkey or ox, is expensive to its owner. These are matters of survival. Depriving a person of his means for survival throws him/her and his/her entire family into endless oppression and agony. Therefore, God has put a restraint on covetousness.

Thus, through commandments six to ten God has placed restraint upon every behavior that will cause for oppression to human beings.

### **God's Concern for the Oppressed in the Old Testament**

Throughout the scripture we can see the concern of God for the oppressed. His concern makes Him repeat commands to His people over and over again against oppressing others. It is consistent with His command to care for those who suffer, such as the poor, the widow, the fatherless, and others who are oppressed. His concern for the oppressed goes to the extent of taking their sufferings upon Himself as the Scripture says, “He was oppressed and He was afflicted, Yet He opened not His mouth; He was lead as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before its shearers is silent, so He

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<sup>19</sup> “Covetousness,” *Websters New World College Dictionary*, (Foster City, CA: IDG Books, 1994).

opened not His mouth.”<sup>20</sup> Also the scripture says, “Surely He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows.”<sup>21</sup>

The following are some scriptural references that show His concerns for the poor.

When you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not wholly reap the corners of your field, nor shall you gather the gleanings of your harvest. And you shall not glean your vineyard, nor shall you gather every grape of your vineyard; you shall leave them for the poor and the stranger: I am the Lord your God.<sup>22</sup>

Again He says, “He who oppresses the poor reproaches his maker. But he who honors Him has mercy on the needy.”<sup>23</sup> Moreover, He gives the following strongly worded command against oppression: “Do not rob the poor because he is poor, nor oppress the afflicted at the gate; For the Lord will plead their cause, and plunder the soul of those who plunder them.”<sup>24</sup> The Scripture repeats, “You shall not pervert the judgment of your poor in his dispute.”<sup>25</sup> God is furious at those who oppress and rob the poor. He warns that He Himself will plead their cause and it will be hard on the oppressor.

God also has compassion on the widow, fatherless, and alien. The Prophet Zachariah reports of God: “Thus says the Lord of hosts: Execute true justice, show mercy and compassion everyone to his brother. Do not oppress the widow or the fatherless, the alien or the poor. Let none of you plan evil in his heart against his brother.”<sup>26</sup> Moses, in the Law Book narrates the law of God. “You shall not afflict any widow or fatherless child. If you afflict them in any way, and they cry at all to Me, I will surely hear their cry and My wrath will become hot and I will kill you with the sword; your wives shall be widows, and your children fatherless.”<sup>27</sup> The Preacher in the book of

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<sup>20</sup> Isaiah 53:7.

<sup>21</sup> Isaiah 53:4.

<sup>22</sup> Leviticus 19:9-10.

<sup>23</sup> Proverbs 14:31.

<sup>24</sup> Proverbs 22:22-23.

<sup>25</sup> Exodus 23:6.

<sup>26</sup> Zechariah 7:9-10.

<sup>27</sup> Exodus 22:22-24.

Ecclesiastes writes, “Then I returned and considered all the oppression that is done under the Sun: And look! The tears of the oppressed, but they have no comforter. On the side of their oppressors there is power, but they have no comforter.”<sup>28</sup>

We see God’s revenge towards the oppressors of the poor, the widow, the fatherless and the alien. The creator God who hears and sees the oppressed is moved by their cry of distress and their heartaches. Our God demands human beings to be gracious and compassionate to the defenseless. God defends the helpless and defenseless. God warns the oppressors, saying “[Y]ou do not oppress the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow, and do not shed innocent blood in this place....”<sup>29</sup>

The extent of the care and concern the Heavenly Father has for the oppressed in general, specifying the stranger, the fatherless, and widows is seen in the following commands where He promises blessing for those who regard the helpless.

When you reap your harvest in your field, and forget a sheaf in the field, you shall not go back to get it, it shall be for the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow, that the Lord your God may bless you in all the works of your hand. When you beat your olive tree, you shall not go over boughs again; it shall be for the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow. When you gather the grapes of your vineyard, you shall not glean it afterward; it shall be for the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow.<sup>30</sup>

### **God Commands Justice for the Oppressed**

Our God, being the God of righteousness, is always found imparting justice to all. He hates oppression and rebukes the oppressor. He always stands for the cause of the poor, the widow, and the destitute. His judgments are always righteous. We see His compassion for the oppressed and the helpless. God commands, “Learn to do good;

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<sup>28</sup> Ecclesiastes 4:1.

<sup>29</sup> Jeremiah 7:6.

<sup>30</sup> Deuteronomy 24:19-21.



seek justice, rebuke the oppressor; Defend the fatherless, plead for the widow.”<sup>31</sup> We also have promises of help from the Lord our God for those who have shown mercy and justice to the oppressed and the needy. They will be blessed.

Is this not the fast that I have chosen: To loose the bonds of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, to let the oppressed go free, and that you break every yoke? Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, and that you bring to your house the poor who are caste out; when you see the naked, that you cover him, and not hide yourself from your own flesh? Then your light shall break forth like the morning, Your healing shall spring forth speedily, And your righteousness shall go before you; The glory of the Lord shall be your rear guard, Then you shall call, and the Lord will answer; You shall cry, and He will say; Here I am.<sup>32</sup>

### **The Woman at Creation**

When God created mankind the woman was within the first created man, Adam. “So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.”<sup>33</sup> God separated the woman from Adam as a comparable helper to him. Adam did not have a suitable mate or a comparable helper from among all the animals and birds and other living things that God brought before him. Adam gave them names and stayed alone. He felt none of these living things were appropriate for him to be a suitable mate or a comparable helper.

And the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall on Adam, and he slept; and He took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh in its place. Then the rib which the Lord God had taken from man He made into a woman, and He brought her to the man. And Adam said: ‘This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh. She shall be called woman, because she was taken out of man’.<sup>34</sup>

Causing a deep sleep, God brought the woman out from one of his ribs. The thoracic cavity is the compartment that protects the heart and the lungs, two of the most vital

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<sup>31</sup> Isaiah 1:17.

<sup>32</sup> Isaiah 58:6-9.

<sup>33</sup> Genesis 1:27.

<sup>34</sup> Genesis 2:20.

organs of the body. The bony rib is an important frame for this compartment. God created her from one of these ribs that were close to his heart, because the woman is supposed to be close to the man's heart and soul. Had the Lord wanted the woman to be a being suppressed by man, He would have either created her from the sole of his foot or from a material that is less important than that He used to create man. This act of creation making a comparable helper is a message that woman was made comparable to man. She is not a being of a lower class or a lower species. Here is also another message for every woman to recognize that by the creation of God she is made a separate individual, unique as a person and special in the eyes of God.

Not only did God create woman from a vital place in man's body, but He created her as a suitable partner for man to live in unity and harmony with. This is important to note. His intent was that together in marriage, they were to multiply and fill the earth according to His purpose. He made them suitable for each other and He instituted the first marriage in the Garden of Eden.

The will of God is to live in togetherness. The Scripture says, "Therefore a man shall leave the father and mother and join his wife, and they shall become one flesh."<sup>35</sup>

So, from marriage the command of God to man is to get himself from the parental family and unite with his wife to set up his own family. This is God's plan for man to fill the earth and stay blessed. This command does not imply that one hate or oppress the mother and father one leaves, but tells of the importance of marriage and the diligence required to handle it. Undoubtedly, it does not give any provision to suppress or oppress the woman. It does not give voice for any man to think that woman is created as a second class human being, but as an equal partner of God's blessing.

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<sup>35</sup> Genesis 2:24.

Christ's stand on divorce is clearly articulated in the Word.

To the disciples and the Pharisees, who came to understand Jesus Christ's position concerning divorce He answered and said to them, 'Have you not read that He who made them at the beginning made them male and female; and said, for this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh? So then, they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate.'<sup>36</sup>

Divorce is a cruel act involving endless oppression to the woman as well as the children born to her. For the children, parental deprivation will cause immense anguish, agony and life-long depression. The children suffer in their development. In many parts of the world, the divorced woman is ostracized.

### **Christ's Position Regarding the Oppressed**

The spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed Me, to preach good tidings to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound. – Isaiah 61:1

The prophet Isaiah uttered these words about 750 years before Christ. He foresaw Christ's ministry. This passage talks of the four different ministries of Christ Jesus as the purpose of His coming. Each of them is concerned with the deliverance of the oppressed.

- i. To proclaim the good news of Salvation
- ii. To heal the brokenhearted
- iii. To proclaim freedom to the captives
- iv. To set the bound free

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<sup>36</sup> Matthew 19:4-6.

Sin is understood as spiritual sickness. Since sickness is oppression, spiritual sickness is spiritual oppression that requires spiritual deliverance or salvation. Preaching the good news leads people to salvation. Matthew narrates:

Now it happened, as Jesus sat at the table in the house, that behold, many tax collectors and sinners came and sat down with Him and His disciples. And when the Pharisees saw it, they said to His disciples, 'Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?' When Jesus heard that, He said to them, 'Those who are well have no need of physician, but those who are sick. But go and learn what this means: I desire mercy and not sacrifice. For I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance.'<sup>37</sup>

Jesus Christ clearly illustrates that sin is a kind of sickness and oppression in the spirit that requires healing and deliverance.

People are brokenhearted in many ways. A broken heart stems from oppression of some kind. To bring healing and comfort to someone who is suffering requires compassion of the heart on the part of the minister. The Apostle John narrates what happened with Jesus in the Bethany home of Mary, Martha and Lazarus, where Lazarus was dead and buried for four days. "Therefore, when Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who came with her weeping, He groaned in the spirit and was troubled. And He said, 'where have you laid him?'...Jesus wept."<sup>38</sup> After having the entrance stone of the tomb removed and ministering to Martha, Jesus spoke to the Father and glorified Him. "Now when He had said these things, He cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth! And he who had died came out bound hand and foot with grave clothes, and his face was wrapped with a cloth. Jesus said to them, 'Loose him and let him go'.<sup>39</sup> Jesus has a compassionate heart for those who are in suffering and in tears. Luke narrates another incidence with Jesus:

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<sup>37</sup> Matthew 9:10-13.

<sup>38</sup> John 11:33-35.

<sup>39</sup> John 11:43-44.

Now it happened, the day after, that He went into a city called Nain; and many of His disciples went with Him, and a large crowd. And when He came near the gate of the city, behold, a dead man was being carried out, the only son of his mother; and she as a widow. And a large crowd from the city was with her. When the Lord saw her, He had compassion on her and said to her, 'Do not weep'. Then He came and touched the open coffin and those who carried him stood still. And He said 'Young man, I say to you, arise'. So he who was dead sat up and began to speak.<sup>40</sup>

During Christ's worldly ministry, He never neglected the brokenhearted. As the Good Samaritan Himself, He reached out and healed with compassion. In Jesus Christ the Healer, the Deliverer and the Prince of Peace, there is no disappointment for anyone, ever. With Him there is always deliverance for the oppressed.

The scripture accounts for various kinds of captivities, such as the Egyptian captivity of Israel, the Babylonian captivity of the Jews, slavery and oppression by others and even physical oppression of persons in the form of sickness and deformities. In every form of captivity and oppression, when the oppressed people's cry reached heaven, we see the Lord God Almighty coming out, as the True Deliverer, to proclaim freedom. During the worldly ministry of Jesus Christ the deliverance ministry was common. Luke in his gospel reports:

On a Sabbath Jesus was teaching in one of the Synagogues, and a woman was there who had been crippled by a spirit for eighteen years. She was bent over and could not straighten up at all. When Jesus saw her, He called her forward and said to her, 'Woman, you are set free from your infirmity'. Then He put His hands on her, and immediately she straightened up and praised God. Indignant because Jesus had healed on the Sabbath, the Synagogue ruler said to the people, 'There are six days for the work. So come and be healed on those days, not on the Sabbath.' The Lord answered him, 'You hypocrites! Doesn't each of you on the Sabbath untie his ox or donkey from the stall and lead it out to give it water? Then should not this woman, a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan has kept bound for eighteen long years, be set free on the Sabbath day from what bound her?'<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Luke 7:11-15.

<sup>41</sup> Luke 13:10-16.

The woman was physically oppressed and bent over for eighteen years by Satan, bound with satanic chains and not allowed to straighten up even once. Jesus Christ set the woman free from her crippled physical state, and enabled her to praise God with a healed and straightened body. Jesus, as liberator of the oppressed, rebuked the ruler of a synagogue who was offended that Christ healed on the Sabbath, yet would readily untie his ox from the stall to bring it to water on the Sabbath.

The Apostle Matthew reports another occasion of a similar kind where the members of a synagogue who would save sheep that fell into a pit on a Sabbath day, but would criticize Christ for bringing healing, deliverance and restoration on the Sabbath.

Going on from that place, He went into the Synagogue, and a man with a shriveled hand was there. Looking for a reason to accuse Jesus, they asked Him, 'Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath? He said to them, 'If any of you has a sheep and it falls into a pit on a Sabbath, will you not take hold of it and lift it out? How much more valuable is a man than a sheep! Therefore it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath'. Then he said to the man, 'Stretch out your hand'. So he stretched it out and it was completely restored, just sound as the other.<sup>42</sup>

One reason for the Son of God's incarnation was to announce freedom to captives. Having no respect for objections from anyone, Jesus Christ announced freedom to the captives.

One can be bound mentally, physically, or spiritually. When one individual is mentally bound, spiritual and physical bindings are also associated. Spiritual binding can lead to mental binding. The same causes for mental bindings can cause psychosomatic disorders from biochemical changes and lead to physical binding. The Scripture gives an example:

And when He (Jesus) stepped out on the land, there met Him a certain man from the city who had demons for a long time. And wore no clothes, nor did he live in a house but in the tombs... For He has commanded the

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<sup>42</sup> Matthew 12:9-13.

unclean spirit to come out of the man. For it had often seized him, and he was kept under guard, bound with chains and shackles; and he broke the bonds and was driven by the demon into the wilderness. Jesus asked him, saying, 'What is your name?' And he said, 'Legion' because many demons had entered him... Then the demons went out of the man and entered the Swine, and the herd ran violently down the steep place into the lake and drowned... Then they went out to see what had happened, and came to Jesus, and they found the man from whom the demons had departed, sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed and in his right mind. And they were afraid.<sup>43</sup>

Evidently, this man was living in the binding of Satan. He was bound by many demons. They claimed that his name was 'Legion', announcing that those in control of the man were equal to a Roman Battalion in number. This was a man who was mentally, physically and spiritually oppressed. We see that they physically seized him many times. He was chained hand and foot and kept under guard. For a long time he did not wear clothes because he was out of his mind. He did not even live in his house for a long time but lived in the tombs. In the prison of Satan he suffered physical and mental bindings. With this mental binding he had no freedom to choose for himself. Deprived of his freedom to choose, he suffered spiritual oppression and was away from God. When the Lord set him free, he gained his spiritual freedom and was found sitting at the feet of Jesus. He gained his physical freedom, and was found dressed and unbound. He gained his mental freedom, and was found in his right mind.

When an individual is mentally oppressed, he/she will not be in a position to think and know for himself/herself that he/she is under oppression. With mental oppression, physical and spiritual torture will also be found. When the individual is operated on by different forces mentally, he/she is not in a mind to think for him/herself. His/her condition will be miserable and helpless. Unless another person in the right mind understands the extent of the captivity and suffering, and volunteers to set the captive

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<sup>43</sup> Luke 8:26-35.

free, the sufferer or the oppressed has no deliverance. Jesus Christ always sought the bound, and willingly set them free, whether man or woman.

### **Jesus Christ and Women**

Women found salvation and comfort in Jesus. Women, being the weaker, found strength in Jesus. He did not come to condemn them. As the comforter of the weak, He was always a source of strength to whichever woman knew Him. When a woman caught in adultery was brought to Jesus and men were ready to stone her to death, Jesus said, "He who is without sin among you, let him throw a stone at her first."<sup>44</sup> Then He stooped down and wrote into their conscience. They all left, conscious-pricked. When He lifted up His head and saw her standing alone, He gently asked, "Woman, where are those accusers of yours? Has no one condemned you?" She said, "No one, Lord." And Jesus said to her, 'Neither do I condemn you', go and sin no more."<sup>45</sup> When the Jews brought her oppressed and ready to be condemned, Jesus was her Deliverer and Comforter.

Simon, the Pharisee, who was once a cursed leper, and was healed of Jesus, did not give him a respectful reception in his home. He did not wash the feet of Jesus according to the Jewish custom of expressing hospitality in receiving a guest. He did not kiss or hug him, nor did he give him oil for his head as was custom. He did not show any gratitude to Jesus for the great deliverance and healing that he had received when he was a leper. To him, this deliverance was a little thing.

Unlike Simon, a grateful woman stood weeping and shedding tears at His feet not even daring to stand in front of Him out of her honor for Him. When she felt as though she dirtied His feet with her tears, she rushed to dry His feet with her hair, and anointed them with a fragrant oil and kissed them. She was a penitent sinner. She could

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<sup>44</sup> John 8:7.

<sup>45</sup> John 8: 10-11.



not count in money or wealth the worth of the forgiveness of sin and of the salvation that she received from Him. She showed unending depth of her gratitude to Him for the salvation she received from Him. Luke describes this:

He went to the Pharisee's house, and sat down to eat. And behold, a woman in the city who was a sinner, when she knew that Jesus sat at the table in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster flask of fragrant oil, and stood at His feet behind Him weeping; and she began to wash his feet with her tears, and wiped them with the hair of her head; and she kissed His feet and anointed them with the fragrant oil.<sup>46</sup>

Jesus had a message to the ungrateful Simon.

Then Jesus turned to the woman and said to Simon, 'Do you see this woman? I entered your house; you gave Me no water for My feet, but she has washed My feet with her tears and wiped them with the hair of her head. You gave Me no kiss, but this woman has not ceased to kiss My feet since the time I came in. You did not anoint My head with oil, but this woman has anointed My feet with fragrant oil. Therefore I say to you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven, for she loved much...Little is forgiven, the same loves little.'<sup>47</sup>

A visit by Jesus Christ and His disciples to the Bethany house was a source of strength and comfort to the lonely and oppressed home of Martha. She was rushing to fix a meal and be hospitable but Mary, who wanted to understand the nature of divine glory, sat at Jesus' feet and listened. About them the Scripture says: "He entered a certain village; and a certain woman called Martha welcomed Him into her house. And she has a sister called Mary, who also sat at Jesus' feet and heard His word."<sup>48</sup>

The Scripture tells the experience of other women of Integrity with Jesus.

Of those women who followed Jesus when He was preaching the good news throughout every city and village, Luke narrates: "And certain women who had been healed of evil sprits and infirmities – Mary called Magdalene, out of whom had come seven demons,

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<sup>46</sup> Luke 7:37-38.

<sup>47</sup> Luke 7:44-47.

<sup>48</sup> Luke 10:38-39.

and Joanna the wife of Chuza, Herod's steward, and Susanna, and many others who provided for Him from their substance."<sup>49</sup>

Mary Magdalene and friends, in gratitude for what they received from Jesus, prepared sweet fragrance of Nard after His crucifixion and burial. They went to anoint His body, despite their knowledge of the presence of Roman soldiers to guard the body in the grave. They had carefully followed the cross and followed the body to the tomb, even when His disciples betrayed and disowned Him. They did it because their gratitude for Him did not end with His death and burial. They wanted to make certain of the place of burial of His body. They believed His words that He would resurrect on the third day. Even in death they did not want to give up their trust and love of Him. So it pleased to Jesus also to show Himself first to Mary of Magdalene after His resurrection.

The women knew that Jesus Christ was the Deliverer of the oppressed. They found in Him a person to pour out their tears and pain. They found in Him a fortress and strength to protect and comfort them in times of trouble. They found in Him their Creator and Savior who individually and specially cares. Even now this fact is evident among the church congregation. Women are always more in number of those going to hear the word of God, because they receive comfort in Him. They know Jesus cares for the oppressed.

### **The Marriage Mystery and Command of God**

Through the marriage mystery, we see God as not having created a first class and second class human being between the husband and wife. There is no first class

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<sup>49</sup> Luke 8:2-3.

human to subjugate a second class human. “This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the Church,” the Apostle Paul said.<sup>50</sup>

The scripture speaks of the marriage bond between a man and a woman as symbolic to the bond between Christ and the Church. God placed this mystery in the Garden of Eden itself, though hidden to mankind. The plan of God for the redeemed of the Lord and His plan of the eternal kingdom of God are not new plans, but have been His plans from the beginning.

A life between a husband and his wife should be of unity and oneness. Sharing love and concern is what the Lord expected of marriage. This is metaphoric of Christ’s care for the Church that He redeemed with His blood and that He also nourishes and cherishes. The Church in turn stands adoring Him. The Scripture says, “For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as the Lord does the Church. For we are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones.”<sup>51</sup> Establishing this truth, the scripture continues to say, “For this reason man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.”<sup>52</sup> In the family context the scriptural command is:

Husbands, love your wives just as Christ also loved the Church and gave Himself for her, that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, that He might present her for Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish.<sup>53</sup>

While the scriptural command for the husband is to love and to cherish his wife as his own body the command for the wife is: “Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the Church, and He

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<sup>50</sup> Ephesians 5:32.

<sup>51</sup> Ephesians 5:29-30.

<sup>52</sup> Ephesians 5:31.

<sup>53</sup> Ephesians 5:25-27.

is the savior of the body. Therefore just as the Church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything.”<sup>54</sup>

Nevertheless, we see a structure within the earthly family where the husband is to lead the wife, as in the heavenly family Christ leads the church. There is no room for control or subjugation allowed for a husband to oppress a wife. God did not make woman a servant to the man but rather made her to be his life partner in a loving and caring relationship to fulfill the purpose of God in creating them as man and woman, to multiply and fill the earth with godly generations.

### **The New Testament Position on Oppression**

God has no partiality and He is not a respecter of persons. For Christ, all are created equal. The Apostle Paul says, “There is no partiality with Him.”<sup>55</sup> In his letter to Colossians, the Apostle says again, “Where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcised nor uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, but Christ is all and in all.”<sup>56</sup>

God is concerned with the oppressed and the poor. The scripture commands masters, “Masters give your bond servants what is just and fair, knowing that you also have a Master in heaven.”<sup>57</sup> Again, it warns masters to impart justice to those that are under them reminding them that they also are in need of mercy and justice from the Great Master in heaven. It reads, “And you, masters, do the same things to them, giving up threatening, knowing that your own Master also is in heaven, and there is no partiality with Him.”<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> Ephesians 5:22-23.

<sup>55</sup> Ephesians 6:9.

<sup>56</sup> Colossians 3:11.

<sup>57</sup> Colossians 4:1.

<sup>58</sup> Ephesians 6:9.

Jesus Christ Himself instructed that God wants everyone to be merciful to others rather than offering sacrifices to Him. He said: “[I] desire mercy and not sacrifice....”<sup>59</sup> Christ permits only love and never oppression. Jesus said: “Love your neighbor, as you love yourself.”<sup>60</sup> Whether friend or enemy, Jesus doesn’t give permission for a person to hate another person. In this one command, love, all the Biblical commandments are condensed. No person has been given the right to oppress another person. Everyone has been given the right to live, right to own, and right to have a family. Concerning love, the New Testament says:

Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks not evil; does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.<sup>61</sup>

In Christ, all are sons, and fellow heirs without any difference. “Through the Gospel the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and shares together in the promise of Christ Jesus.”<sup>62</sup> The New Testament again teaches us, “For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.”<sup>63</sup> So, the New Testament does not provide for any kind of oppression of men or women.

### **The Place of Oppression in the Messianic Kingdom**

Oppression has no place in the Messianic Kingdom. No living being will have opportunity to oppress another being. As the Scripture says:

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<sup>59</sup> Matthew 12:7.

<sup>60</sup> Matthew 22:39.

<sup>61</sup> 1 Corinthians 13:4-7.

<sup>62</sup> Ephesians 3:6.

<sup>63</sup> Galatians 3:26-28.

But with righteousness He will judge the needy, with justice. He will give decisions for the poor of the earth... Righteousness will be His belt and faithfulness the sash around His waist. The wolf will live with the lamb, the leopard will lie down with the goat, the calf and the lion and the yearling together; and a little child will lead them. The cow will feed with bear, their young will lie down together, and the lion will play near the hole of the cobra, and the young child will put his hands into the vipers nest. They will neither harm nor destroy on all My Holy Mountain, for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.<sup>64</sup>

Although the Bible is full of references about the peaceful fellowship and prosperous Messianic period on earth, the researcher would prefer to limit its reference within the one that just precedes. We see that this period has no oppression between human beings or any other living beings whatsoever. None will ever think to harm or hurt another. There will not be any predator or prey. All will live on earth in Messianic peace.

### **Women in Heaven Like Angels**

Heaven is neither a place of oppression nor a place of married life. Whether a man or woman, if a person is redeemed of the Lord and has received the blessing of dying in Christ, or living in Christ at the resurrection of the Saints, that individual will live forever in heavenly peace and joy in an imperishable and immortal body, like the angels. Jesus Christ said, "At the resurrection people will neither marry nor be given in marriage; they will be like angels in heaven."<sup>65</sup>

Finally, on examination of the scriptures this researcher could not find any provision from God for oppression. When the cry of the Israelites against the Egyptian oppression reached the presence of God, He was moved with compassion and came to deliver the oppressed. He placed restraints against oppression of every kind through the later six commandments. Throughout the Old Testament we see how concerned God was for the care of the oppressed. He warns the oppressors, and promises blessings to

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<sup>64</sup> Isaiah 11:4-9.

<sup>65</sup> Matthew 22:30.

those who care for the oppressed. He has given instructions to judges to impart justice to the oppressed without partiality. On the examination of woman at creation we do not see any reason to believe that woman was created as a second class being under man. Jesus Christ has not permitted any kind of oppression of either women or the poor.

Women always more gratefully accepted and followed Christ. They approached Him more often in times of trouble. The marriage mystery allows only for the care, concern and respect of women and never to oppress one other. In the family order, man deserves respect and woman deserves care. Nowhere in the New Testament is there any provision for oppression. There is no place for oppression in the Messianic Kingdom but only justice, righteousness, peaceful fellowship and a prosperous Messianic period on the earth. In heaven there is no sex difference and marriage, but all are like angels.

Whether man or woman, all who are in Christ are sons of God. In mission and ministry every one is equally important. A minister of the word of God is called to search for every soul who is not redeemed in Christ; whether a woman or a man, low caste or high caste, poor or rich, oppressed or oppressor. They are equally under the oppression of the arch-enemy of God, the devil. This compels the minister to be equally burdened for all those who are oppressed. In Christ and in heaven there are no divisions.

## **CHAPTER 3 - LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Systematic Oppression as a Way of Life**

The famed Indian tradition of tolerance stems from revered social texts such as the “Valluvar-Aram” which emphasizes “virtues such as honesty, the refraining of injuring living beings, purity, good will, mercy, patience, forbearance, self restraint, generosity, and asceticism.”

While giving lip service to nobility of thought and action, the Indian social fabric was built upon the most base of human impulse, greed. There is no other way to understand the institutionalized exploitation of one social stratum upon another and of one sex over another. It is greed for position, power and wealth that fuels all forms of exploitation. Where this power differential originated can only be surmised.

Perhaps the story began with the fall of a sophisticated and cultured people, the Indus River Civilization, now called Dravidians. It is theorized that this occurred over a prolonged period of time as wave after wave of Aryan invaders over-ran the planned cities of this people. In time, the war-like, fair skinned Aryans totally subdued the original dark-skinned inhabitants of the land. To maintain their hold on power, these invaders relegated their predecessors to menial and humiliating positions which they eventually institutionalized into a system of castes. In time, lead by their priestly class who by weaving stories of conquest into a new, amalgamated religion, the Aryans cemented their exploitive class system into religion.

The process took centuries and involved many twists and turns. The Aryan priestly class, or Brahmins, in time became the highly respected, educated elite. Meanwhile, the subjugated Dravidians were cast into the social status of “Untouchable”, becoming uneducated and despised. But despite this pogrom to eventually eradicate a race, their influence is still felt thousands of years later. Within the Hindu religion itself



exist traces of this dichotomy. For example, there are those who worship the fair Vishnu (mostly in the North), and those who revere the dusky-hued Shiva in the South. Shiva, who is represented by the “lingam,” or phallic symbol, was worshiped in the cities of the Indus River people. The Shiva-lingam has been found in those cities, dating back before the Aryan conquest.

Since these Dravidian people could not be fully vanquished by social programs, an ingenious solution of religious bias was instituted. This began with the notion of Karma, which means “acts,” that would help one attain a higher spiritual state. Karma came to imply adhering to the guidelines and expectations of one's own caste. Thus a system that exploited the body evolved into one that oppressed the soul.

It will only be a matter of time and degree before those who condone racial exploitation favor sexual exploitation as well (or vice versa). With the first whiff of power and prestige, the oppressor is induced to continue exploiting. Thus in time, the keepers of the religion encoded a system of exploitation that increased power at the top, and removed even the vestiges of respectability at the bottom. It is not surprising therefore, that the Sudras (Untouchables) are darker than the Brahmans (the highest caste), and that men have infinitely more power than women in the land of India and its religious practices. This chapter will examine the literature to discover how this process came to be.

### **The Historical Process of Brahmanicalization of the Indus**

The Brahmanicalization or Hinduization of the ‘Indu’ people of Indu land, (India) is a schematized system for social exploitation. Passing through various processes over the past couple of millennia and a half, it has arrived at the present generation as religion, culture and society. It altered the body, soul and spirit of billions of women and men. Women suffered brutally under this system. Non-Brahmin men suffered miserably

at its whim under its biased pronouncements. They were beguiled by its subtleties and accepted this oppression as part of their religious obligations.

The “Indu” people or the native Indians as well as the “Indu” land inherited their common name “Indu” from the “River Indu”, which went with Pakistan at partition. Since the Brahmin immigrants could not pronounce the word “Indu”, they called themselves “Hindu.” The Aryan elite created volumes of mythical narratives. To accomplish their egoistic desires, they created mythical narratives that imposed an actual order on the lands they had subjugated. Refusing to fully accept the Brahminical Hindu “Divide and Rule” policy, the Indus, or original Indians, continued to resist implicitly and explicitly, showing two very strong divisions in faith and tradition in India that persists today. Nevertheless, to a large extent, they achieved their ambition of Brahminicalizing or Hinduising the Indus of the Indu land of India. E. James R. Daniel says:

The reactions of and the views expressed by religious leaders and leaders of various political parties clearly point to a vertical divide, with one group opposing tooth and nail the Hindutva (Brahminicalization) ideology and the other defending and promoting the Hindutva cause, at any cost. Put differently, their reflections are the crude manifestation of the Dravidian-Aryan divide, the non-Brahminical-Brahminical, or the Valluvar Aram (Social Justice), Varnashrama Dharma (Social exploitation), Democratic-Fascistic divide, which the Dravidian parties and Dravidian movement have fought for over a century and made decisive victory, now staging a come back to the contemporary socio-political discourse, but, sadly enough, this time the Aryan Minority(Brahminical Minority) through its deceptively subtle socio-political and religious maneuvering threatening to devour or score a victory over the Dravidian Majority.<sup>1</sup>

A sufficiently detailed history on the early part of varna or caste system formation has been recorded by a few authors. D.B. Mishra says:

Orissa has been known as a land of various tribal communities (the natives of Orissa) from the early historical period. The Kalingas, the Utkalas and Odras (Oretas, in classical Greek writings), made the three important tribes among them. The religions in which they inhabited for a long time came to be known as Kalinga, Utkala and Odra respectively.

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<sup>1</sup> E. James R. Daniel, *Anti Conversion Law and Religions Harmony* (Martandam: Nesamony Institute of Religion and Society, 2003), 6-7.

The three tribes entered into the Ksatraj Varna in the Varna system of the Aryans and became the ruling family. The Champions of the process of Aryanization built up interesting legends in the Puranas to prove their Aryan origin.<sup>2</sup>

The Indu natives, by the compulsion of their native Kings from the Brahmin pressure, gave their minds over to leaning on the Aryan or Brahminical Varna system right after the influx of the Aryans into the country. The Kalinga, the Utkala, and the Odra Indus became Ksatraj Varna, the first victims of Aryan Varna system or the social exploitation system. They were the ruling families or the Kshatriyas. Although the origin of Jainism, Buddhism and Brahmanism were in the 6<sup>th</sup> Century B.C, it was King Asoka who crushed the Kalinga Kingdom in B.C 261 and played a major role in bringing many of the Indu people into the Aryan fold. Legends were made in support of the Kshatriya class of people which was formed from the Indu natives of Kalinga, Utkala and Odra of Orissa. Legends, as always, are merely legends, and not history. D.B Mishra continues to say:

Thus the Ksatriyas rose in the Eastern part of India before 6<sup>th</sup> Century B.C. They contested with Brahmins to provide leadership to the society. Orissa came under the spell of the movement since that time. The process of Aryanization made progress when it came under Maurian Empire. Asoka's missionary activities invited people from different sections. The tribal people (natives) took opportunity to enter into the Aryan way of life. ... [I]nspite of the Aryanization of some of the tribal communities; the pre-eminence of the Brahmins was recognized in the society. [A]soka, though himself was a Buddhist, has shown high regards for the Brahmanas.<sup>3</sup>

The Brahmanism that came into India by 6<sup>th</sup> Century B.C continued to attract the Indus, seducing them to accept the Brahmin system until around 4<sup>th</sup> Century A.D at a steady pace. But with the supremacy of the Guptas in the land, the status and power of Brahmanism rose, because of the Gupta Kings' heavy contributions to the Brahmins. D. B. Mishra says:

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<sup>2</sup> D. B. Mishra, *Concise History of Orissa* (Ludhiana: Kalyani Publishers, 2005), 266.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

A rise of the imperial Guptas in the 4<sup>th</sup> Century A.D is a land mark in the history of India. Brahmins emerged very powerful with generous and liberal patronage of the Guptas. It had influenced the Indian Society. Orissa came under the cultural influence of the Gupta rule from the middle of the 4th Century A.D.<sup>4</sup>

The Indu Ksatriyas or the original ruling Kings of many Kingdoms also gave substantial donations and lands to the Brahmins. And the Kings trusted the Brahmins who spread Brahmanic culture and religions. Mishra says, "The Brahmins were entrusted with the duties of spreading the Vedic (Brahmanic) religion and culture among the people."<sup>5</sup>

The Brahmins were being appointed to hold the top positions in the society. They created the varnasrama or the making of four caste divisions called the Brahmins, the Ksathriyas, Vaisyas and the Sudras; the four stratified classes of social structure. The Sudras who practiced professions such as butcher and janitor were made untouchables. "When the Brahmins were trying to set up Varnasrama (caste system of social exploitation) in Orissa, they had the tribal population (natives) in their mind."<sup>6</sup> The Brahmins had gained such a high influence with native Kings that all the high post positions of the Kingdoms were entrusted to the hands of the Brahmins. Mishra says:

The Brahmanas had suffixed a number of epithets to their names such as Bhatta, Sharma, Acharya, Deva Sharma, Kara Sharma, Senapati, Bhattopadhyaya, Pathi, Panditha, Vajapayi, etc. They were appointed in high offices like Jyothisa (Astrologer), Chamopathi, Rajguru (Royal Preceptor), Senapti (General of Army), Mantri (Minister), Sthanadhipati (Divisional Administrator), Pradhani (the Chief), etc.<sup>7</sup>

All these turned out to be for the Brahmin's convenience. They took power into their own hands and made the Kings as well as the native peoples weak and humbled them through their processes of Brahmanicalization. They subdued and oppressed the Indu natives. They divided the people of the land into countless divisions and ruled over

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

them. Some divisions they pushed down to the level of 'untouchables', and elevating the Brahmin man as the only one qualified to enter heaven. The Brahminical exploitation was interwoven with the rebirth theory to make the system work for the ruling caste. The Jainist and the Buddhist faiths did not take hold to the same level; neither did they achieve a level of acceptance of the Brahmanical philosophy. Once Brahmanism became very powerful, Jainism and Buddhism could not survive in their own birth land, India. Accepting this Brahmana religion, every one aspires to be born as a Brahmin man in the next re-birth, so bowing down before him in perfect obedience in this one.

### **Women and Oppression**

Orissa is a State with a high percentage of socially exploited low castes and out caste people. As such, the system of oppression described above is active and rigorously enforced in this land. Of the 36.8 million people recorded from the present census of Orissa, according to the Malayala Manorama Year Book of 2007, "males are 18.6 million and females are 18.1 million. Among them 9 million people are from hill tribes and Dalit."<sup>8</sup> As they are not allowed to enjoy the privilege of education, poverty and oppression runs rampant. Some women and Dalits are untouchables. The practice of untouchability where one must literally cross the road to stay away from a high caste human is very much being practiced in Kalahandi district. Women are very much oppressed and suppressed in various ways.

According to the Brahmanical religious code of Manu, women are not to be considered as human individuals. They are to exist for men to use and abuse, and so, are to be strictly placed under men's controlled custody without freedom in life. They are forced to lead a secluded life as recommended by the Brahmanical Scripture. Helen Barret Montgomery records of female oppression read:

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<sup>8</sup>Mammen Matthew ed. *Manorama Year Book 2007* (Kottayam: Malayala Manorama Press, 2007), 629.

From marriage to death the most highly gifted, the most respected, the most cultivated women of India pass their lives in jail-like seclusion. This system of inuring their women in prison like confinement is often laid to the outrages perpetrated by the Mohammedan invaders, but 900 years before Christ, in the most sacred code of Hinduism the Code of Manu, it was enacted: A woman is not allowed to go out of the house without the consent of her husband, she may not laugh without veil over her face or look out of a door or window.<sup>9</sup>

Regarding the control of women, the code of Manu, which is the constitution of the religion, prescribes, "Neither by sale nor by repudiation is a wife released by her husband; such we know to be the law which the Lord of creatures made of old."<sup>10</sup> Alice B. Van Doren says of this, "[T]he black shadow cast by that religion which holds no place for the redemption of woman."<sup>11</sup>

In Indian marriages, there is a high expectation for gifts, jewelry and presentations by the bride to the groom and his family. Marriage is considered a matter of prestige to the bride's family and her relatives in the society. To find a good and well-standing bridegroom from among the bride's society is difficult and it requires a payment. The bride is given away by her parents to the groom as animals are in the marketplace, without regard for her self-esteem. She becomes his property and has to disown herself from her parental family. Sometimes the bride may not see her family at all after her marriage due to family feuds. She has no value in her husband's home if she doesn't carry a load of dowry to his home. This researcher also has faced the same experience in many ways. Many families struggle to survive after their daughter's marriage and many go into deep debt. Some families commit suicide with the bride when they cannot come up with the dowry.

The expenditure on the bride's side doesn't end with the dowry payment alone, but continues through child birth. In addition to total payment of all her delivery

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<sup>9</sup> Helen Barret Montgomery, *Western Women in Eastern land* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1911), 191.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Alice B. Van Doren, *Lighted to Lighten* (Massachusetts: The Central Committee on United Study of Foreign Mission, 1922), 3.

expenses, her parents must bear loads of gifts to her husband's family as well as the new born. Also, with every festival, the bride's parents are supposed to carry special gifts to satisfy the in-law and family. Alice B. Van Doren writes: "The family exchequer is drained to the dregs to provide the heavy dowry, the burdensome expenditure for wedding feast and jewels, and the presentation of numerous wedding garments to equally numerous and expectant relatives."<sup>12</sup>

The dowry system is a killer practice with the goal of subjugating and dehumanizing the whole female population as the Hindu Scripture like Manu is enforced on the people. Jane McNally writes:

What shall we say about suicides and dowry deaths? The New Delhi police report that deaths in the city of about six women per day are dowry-related or suicides. The May 15, 1993 issue of the communist news paper Blitz reported that in Gujarat, which it calls decidedly the most saffronized state in the country, one woman commits suicide every hour to escape the consequences of being born in that sex. In the State, the suicide rate has gone up from one per day in 1953 to 25 per day in 1993.<sup>13</sup>

The New Indian Express reported a high profile dowry case which is presently in the court: "A dowry harassment case has been registered in Maradabad against Union Home Resource Development Minister Arjun Singh on a complaint from the father of his (Singh's) grand daughter-in-law, Priyanka."<sup>14</sup> From this case we can evaluate the dowry practice of this country. If a family of this caliber is so greedy, what shall we say about the common people? Mr. Arjun Singh is a Parliamentarian and a Cabinet Minister, who administers law and order. But he does not practice in his own life what he enforces on others. The New Indian Express article reports: "A convict must be sentenced to death in 'brutal' and 'rarest of rare' dowry death cases. ... [S]uch cases should be held as tantamount to murder and be regarded as 'rarest of rare cases' in which a death

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<sup>12</sup>Ibid.

<sup>13</sup>Jane McNally, *ABUSE of Christian Women in India* (Delhi, ISPCK, 1999), 20.

<sup>14</sup>Dowry case against Arjun Singh: *The New Indian Express*, a daily News (Thiruvananthapuram, July 30, 2007), 9.

sentence can be given.”<sup>15</sup> Dowry demand and dowry torture and killings are steadily increasing in Orissa. No one speaks for a silenced woman. Manipadma Jena writes on the Internet:

The low socio-economic indicators are also reflected in the skyrocketing dowry harassment figures. According to the Human Rights Protection Committee in the State and the Orissa crime Branch Statistics, the decade 1990-2000 registered a 460 percent increase in dowry killings and 405.11 percent increase in dowry torture as compared to 1980-90.”<sup>16</sup>

In Orissa, a new trend has developed, ‘jobs as dowry.’ The debt ridden state of Orissa, is running rampant with unemployment. An increasing number of educated young men are jobless and with no income. So, they are using dowry demand as a form of jobs. If the women lose their jobs they are thrown out of their husbands’ house. This uncivilized, unethical, barbarous attitude creates dowry torture mentally and physically, and eventually, women commit suicide due to heart breaking shame and humility.

Manipadma Jena writes a scenario:

When Mahanadi coal fields ... promised one job for each displaced family, five women were in line for these jobs and five unemployed youth came forward to marry them. They married in 1992. When the years dragged on and the women did not get the promised jobs, their husbands abandoned them.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Manipadma Jena, “And Now, Jobs as Dowry,” <http://www.boloji.com/wfs3/wfs422.htm>; Internet; accessed October 15, 2007.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.



In another scenario she notes:

Nilam Sahoo ... got a job as a health worker in a village, an unemployed youth from the same village proposed to her. His family did not want dowry, they were happy that Sahoo had a job. But seven months after marriage, the health project shut down and Sahoo was jobless. Her in-laws threw her out of their home as she could not fund the household.<sup>18</sup>

Manipadma Jena writes about Banaja Raol's dowry suicide:

Raol's wedding was fixed, with the groom-side agreeing to forego 'normal' dowry in due of the stability that her government job offered. Before the marriage, however, she lost her job when the Orissa government retrenched staff to deal with a financial crunch. The groom's family immediately called off the marriage. Humiliated and desperate, Raol immolated herself in front of the Orissa State Assembly. Her suicide note read, "I have neither a job, nor can I get married; my future stretches before me as an area of darkness. What will I gain by living?"<sup>19</sup>

Dowry killings and dowry torture take many forms. Some women commit suicide by burning themselves because of the unlimited torture. Dowry is demanded in the form of money, furnished homes, new vehicles and land, etc. An internet article by Nayan Mijar reports:

Many married woman commit suicide by burning themselves because they cannot bear the tension and the strain that they and their parents are put through by their in-laws and sometimes by their husbands demanding dowry in the form of flat, car or cash in return for marrying them. Some times the in-laws themselves proceeded to burn the woman.<sup>20</sup>

The Darithri daily News Paper of Orissa, Kalahandi, reported on 2007, "In Noapoda a wife for one year was beaten with rod and killed by the husband and his father and mother for dowry. Wife was asked to go back to her mother and bring more dowry. She was unable to satisfy them."<sup>21</sup>

Dowry killings often take place on the charge of being a witch. As panic, fear and depression grip her, a woman's behavior may give her killers the opportunity to label her a witch and condemn her to death. Greed for money possesses everything here.

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Nayan Mijar, "Progress and problems of women in India," available from <http://www.boloji.com/women/02.htm>; Internet; accessed on October 15, 2007.

<sup>21</sup> *Dharithri Daily News Paper*, translated from Oriya (Kalahandi, July 1, 2007) 1.

Because of the lust for money, from the Federal Government minister to the local police officer (who will not write the First Incident Report without a bribe) everything is corrupted. The greater the bribe, the greater the injustice perpetrated. Thus, the poor have no justice, least of all women. The India Human Rights Report 2006 reads:

Killing of women on the charges of being “witches” was prevalent in most of the districts of Orissa. At least 50 such deaths were recorded in Sundhargarh district since 2001, while in Ganjam district 34 suspected witches were killed since 2001 and Mayurbhanj district recorded 15 deaths since 2003.<sup>22</sup>

While dowry killing has increased, dowry torture is pervasive and endemic. India Human Rights Report 2006 states:

According to the State government of Orissa, 2550 cases were registered relating to dowry and no-dowry torture in 2005. Of these, charge-sheets were filled in 1,247 cases, final report submitted in 7 cases, 27 cases turned out Mistakes of Fact/ Mistake of Law, 6 turned out to be no-recognizable and 18 false. The remaining 1,245 cases were pending for investigation.<sup>23</sup>

Many middle class and upper class parents educate their sons to be doctors and engineers so that they may collect a high dowry from the bride's home. The education of the bride has no value. In fact, the more she is educated the more her dowry will be. Middle class families are the worst hit among the population. This treacherous practice must be eradicated. John McNally says, “Unscrupulous people have turned marriage into profit making, and much publicized dowry deaths are a result.”<sup>24</sup> The deaths of many women continue to be dowry related suicides or dowry related murders. These murders often never come to the awareness of the court or to the public due to lack of eyewitnesses or proof. If seldom a case goes to court, because of the absence of witnesses and evidence on the part of the deceased and because of corruption in law

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<sup>22</sup> “Violence against Women,” *India Human Rights Report 2006*, 3.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> John McNally, *ABUSE of Christian Women in India* (Delhi: ISPCK, 1999), 11.

enforcement, the murderers are not brought to justice and no justice is imparted for the silenced one.

Often, women themselves have become enemies of women. Women who have survived the brutality often identify with the oppressors and perpetuate this tragedy. Occasionally, the mother-in-law, who went through the same torture, uses this torture system on her daughter-in-law in a power struggle. The practice of dowry subjugates and dehumanizes the female population as long as people accept the Brahmanical Scriptures like Manu dharma which is presently enforced on the land.

Female infanticide is mostly practiced among rich and middle class families. It is cultural and religious with socio-economic implications as related above. The killing of female infants in this land is countless. The killers of infants interpret these merciless killings as mercy killings. Since dowry gifts are demanded when a girl is to be married, families commonly practice infanticide of baby girls, more so, if the family already has a girl.

Gita Aravamudan narrates Karuppayee's own experience under "Born to die":

I lay on my bed weak after childbirth. My mother-in-law picked up the baby and started feeding her milk. I knew what she was doing. I cried and tried to stop her. But she had already given her milk laced with yerakkam paal [the poisonous juice of the oleander plant]. Within minutes, the baby turned blue and died, Karuppayee says matter-of-factly. It was my very first face-to-face encounter with female infanticide. My first instinct was disbelief.<sup>25</sup>

In the past when India was under British rule, the government took an intolerant stance against inhuman practices towards Indian women. Specifically, people in some parts of India angered the British with the horror of infanticide, which is seen in their usage of terms in various documents. Mansoor Moadel writes:

The practice of infanticide among certain clans of feudatory Rajputs and other tribes in Central and Western India further aroused British

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<sup>25</sup> Githa Aravamudan, "Born To Die – Female children are killed as soon as they are born," available from [www.rediff.com/news/2001/oct/24spec.htm](http://www.rediff.com/news/2001/oct/24spec.htm); Internet; accessed 18 August 2007.

Indignation. The documentary terms that run through the official documents were: Inhuman, unnatural, revolting, atrocious, horrid, disgusting, disgraceful, shocking, grievous, sinful, wicked, wretched, detestable, execrable, dreadful, abominable, barbarous, aggravatedly murderous, diabolical.<sup>26</sup>

Dowry is the main reason for female infanticide. It is costly for parents to raise girls, educate them, and then to find a huge amount of money and gold to send with them. Additionally, parents need to find a groom from the proper caste to satisfy their religious faith, and keep themselves from the indignation of family and society. The value of girls goes down when the price of gold goes up. When dowry is priced in gold, the state of the economy may determine a woman's fate. A sovereign, which is 8 grams of gold, is the standard measure of a woman's worth. Thus, the demand is for 50, 100 or 200 sovereigns of gold in addition to expensive cars, land, cash and other properties. Satisfying the demand of the prospective groom and his family is burdensome to a great percentage of people. Considering the cost involved in preparing a girl for marriage, many people think of eliminating her at her birth or even before she ever sees sunlight. Gita Aravamudan says the following about the techniques used for killing infants in her internet article:

Traditionally, the unwanted girl children are fed milk laced with either yerakkam paal (oleander juice) or paddy husk as soon as they are born. The husk method is crueler; it slits the tender gullet with its sharp sides as it slides down the tiny throat. The more modern families use pesticides or sleeping pills. Sometimes they suffocate the infant with a pillow.<sup>27</sup>

Savita Hiremath adds up the methods as, "Strangling to death, burning her alive or simply starve to death. The killers have devised cleverer methods to escape arrest.

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<sup>26</sup> Mansoor Moadel, "Religion and Women: Islamic modernism versus fundamentalism," *Journal for Scientific Study of Religion* (March 1998), 4.

<sup>27</sup> Githa Aravamudan, "Born To Die – Female children are killed as soon as they are born," available from [www.rediff.com/news/2001/oct/24spec.htm](http://www.rediff.com/news/2001/oct/24spec.htm); Internet; accessed 18 August 2007.

Wrap it in a wet towel so that it develops pneumonia. They seek medical help later but only to throw away the medicines and rush to dig a grave.”<sup>28</sup>

The surgical tables of clinics and hospitals have turned into the murdering tables of innocent infant girls. Doctors and nurses who practice under the oath to never cause harm, are corrupted by the stench of money and sell their services for the basest of impulses: killers for hire. Reuters published this report on the internet:

Thirty polythene bags stuffed with body parts of female fetuses and newly born babies have been found in a dry well near a private clinic in the east Indian state of Orissa... Police suspect the body parts -- mainly skulls and bones -- were dumped in the well shortly after birth or abortion at the clinic in Nayagarh district....<sup>29</sup>

On its statistics, the reporter continues to say, “The government says around 10 million girls have been killed by their parents -- either before or immediately after birth -- over the past 20 years.”<sup>30</sup>

It is shocking and saddening to hear that in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, when education and human culture are said to have grown to their pinnacle, those charged with protecting life would take it. A woman who carried her baby in her womb for nine months is considered a feelingless object with no voice. Marilyn Gore, through the New Indian Express reports:

[U]sha Devipujak gave birth to a healthy baby girl, not everyone was happy. Her husband, Gopal, had a shocking reaction. Two days after she was born, he tried to kill his daughter. Incidents like this one, which took place in Amraiwadi, are not uncommon in the state where the ‘anti female mindset’ highly prevails. ... Before attempting to kill the baby girl, Gopal had tried to convince his wife to go for an abortion ... after conducting a sex determination test in a private clinic. Sex determination tests are illegal here. When Usha refused, Gopal abused her. And, now after the baby was born, Gopal visited Usha, picked up the sleeping baby and

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<sup>28</sup> Savita Hiremath, *Woman's Life; A fortnightly Express Report* (Thiruvananthapuram: Express Publications Ltd., Tuesday, August 7, 2007), 3.

<sup>29</sup> Reuters, "Indian police find 30 bags filled with baby bones"; available from <http://www.reuters.com/article/worldNews/idUSDEL14285820070723>; Internet; accessed Tuesday 21 August 2007.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

threw her out on the muddy road. 'I knew he did not want the baby because she was a girl', says Usha.<sup>31</sup>

Generally, Indian society prefers males over females, for the reasons outlined above.

Almost everywhere girls are treated with cruelty, and not given a chance to the life men enjoy. These men stand against God's plan and purpose. The census of India in all states except Kerala shows an alarming difference in the ratio of boys to girls. If the government and the human rights societies do not quickly intervene, the impact on society can last generations. Savitha Hiremath says:

Economist Klasen and Wink have notes that this number of missing people was larger than all the people who died during the combined famines in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, and the death toll of world wars I and II combined. According to the World Bank, in demographic terms, a 100 million missing women represented 70 percent of the current female population in the US.<sup>32</sup>

The question we must ask is: can the hand of a mother who carried a life for nine months with much physical struggle and who delivers with much pain, strike the life which beat in her? It is hard to believe or digest. Though some may die at their mothers' hands, most are killed by others. Savita quotes from Gita Aravamudan's writings, "the hand that takes the life of the infant may be hers, but the will is not."<sup>33</sup> This comes of the subjugation and dehumanization of women over the centuries. Thus the Indian woman lost self awareness and self confidence. She has no self 'will' but is operated by someone else's will. She is victimized to the level of sacrificing her own baby on the altar of this male-centric society. Savita Hiremath writes: "If not for her victimized state, how could she not feel the first throbbings of the heart, the fluttering inside her womb, the self-awakening movements of the fetus, its clingingly tender skin,

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<sup>31</sup> Marilyn Gore, *The New Indian Express* (Thiruvananthapuram: Express Publications Ltd., Monday, August 21, 2006), 10.

<sup>32</sup> Savita Hiremath, *Woman's life*, a fortnightly Express Report (Thiruvananthapuram: Express Publications Ltd., Tuesday, August 7, 2007), 3.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

and the heart-warming cries reaching for her breasts?"<sup>34</sup> Instead, if the girl baby arrives at her parental home safely, the same home turns into her murdering place, and the backyard, her graveyard. In case she is sold for money, the human sacrificial altar of a killer goddess turns into her butchering place. If she is still unborn, her mother's own womb turns her first tomb in a sex determining clinic, before going to the waste bin or septic tank.

Some people even dare not to take the pain of killing the girls before burying them. Just like dumping their dirt in a little pit and covering it with a little spade full of soil, they throw their living female children into small holes and throw a spade-full of soil over them giving no respect for the life proceeded from them. Under the "Murder in the Womb", Savita narrates the following case of a child who was buried alive:

A couple of weeks back, when Abdul Rehman (52), took away his two-day-old granddaughter from her mother, he knew exactly where he was headed to. For he did not have to dig deep ... Had it not been for that tiny hand sticking out of the freshly dug grave asking for life, perhaps no one would have known how this angel survived despite the genuine efforts of the criminal.<sup>35</sup>

Savita continues in surprise of India's benighted standard while boasting of itself enjoying a belighted civilization:

But what this benighted land does not realize is, buried though, these mutilated images will remain as relics to remind us of the blighted civilization we have become, the abandoned cemetery that we fondly tend to. No one knows how many more have been buried already. But certainly they are in million as studies suggest.<sup>36</sup>

In Orissa, with problems such as poverty, dowry killings, female infanticide; feticide is standing out more these days than ever before. The patriarchal values are deeply rooted in this society, where the value of a male child is so much more important, to continue and maintain their traditional values and possessions. The ever increasing

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

dowry demand system among poverty stricken and harried parents brings stress when a female child is born. This is felt even more so among well-to-do and middle class people in Orissa. Instead of fighting the practice, they condone the killing of their female children to escape the socio-religious structure and culture. Bishakha Bhanja writes in the internet "Unfortunately instead of stopping the evil (dowry) they want to get rid of the girl child."<sup>37</sup>

As soon as modern technology like amniocentesis and ultrasound became available in the state of Orissa in recent years, the identification and eradication of the future problem of parents by means of female feticide became quite easy. A law was passed by the government for the detection of abnormalities between 12-20 weeks of gestation so that the fetus may be aborted if an abnormality is found. This became a means for greedy medical personnel to put more money in their pocket, and for financially constrained or religiously fanatical parents to practice this wicked and abominable practice. Bishakha says:

This is because the amniocentesis test was claimed to be used for detection of fetal abnormalities, which were permitted by the MTP Act. According to the MTP Act, if any abnormality is detected between 12 to 18 weeks of gestational period in the fetus, an abortion can be legally carried out up to 20 weeks of pregnancy.<sup>38</sup>

The travesty here is that the very professionals entrusted with the charge of maintaining and protecting life have, for a pile of gold, perpetuated the systematic elimination of the most helpless, and the most in need. Instead of giving voice to the voiceless, they permanently silence them. Instead of educating the ignorant, these medical mercenaries establish this repugnant practice right into the mainstream of Indian life. Feticide has gone high tech with the participation of the medical community. T. K.

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<sup>37</sup> Bishakha Bhanja, "Female Feticide in Orissa," available from [http://kalingatimes.com/orissa\\_news/news/20070801\\_Female\\_foeticide\\_in\\_Orissa.htm](http://kalingatimes.com/orissa_news/news/20070801_Female_foeticide_in_Orissa.htm); Internet; accessed October 15, 2007.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.



Rajalekshmi writes under the heading, "Wombs as Graves": "The female feticide expose in Nayagarh points to a practice that is prevalent through the state."<sup>39</sup> Prafulla Das writes under the heading, "Orissa's Unborn Daughters":

Kalpana complex has been very much in the news as it housed Krishna Clinic, a nursing home that has been pulled up for carrying out mass female feticide. The clinic was owned by Nabakrushna Sahu's wife Sabita Sahu. Sahu who is still in government service, has been on leave for the past two years, apparently to manage his wife's clinic. Sabita Sahu is now in judicial custody following her arrest. ... Sabita Sahu's arrest came soon after Nayagarh police retrieved large quantities of infant body parts from a 6-meter-deep pit that her clinic allegedly used to dump medical waste. Between July 22 and July 25, the authorities took out around 150 polythene packets. ... many of them had infant skulls and bones more than 60 fetuses. On July 24, the same writer found a large number of bones and skulls still lay scattered. ... The human remains were not very old or decomposed. ... The crime came to light on July 14 when a 12 year old school boy saw seven female fetuses packed in blood stained polythene bags, while searching for waste bottles.<sup>40</sup>

Prafulla Das continued on the same clinic:

The detection of the second pit led to the arrest of seven persons who managed nursing homes and ultrasound clinics. ... most of the private nursing homes and ultrasound clinics in the small town had sprung up in the past six years. The authorities also knew that sex determination and termination of pregnancies were conducted in the clinics.<sup>41</sup>

On the legalization of abortion and technology driven sex determination Jane

McNally writes:

Abortion was legalized in 1971, and abortion by sex selection through amniocentesis began in 1978. This shows in the census figures, which are tragic and greatly deplored. In 1978-83, 18000 abortions of female fetuses were reported as performed following tests for sex determination. A survey in 1982 revealed that out of 8000 abortions in six Bombay Hospitals, 7999 were females.<sup>42</sup>

It is not difficult to believe that the primary purpose of most of these abortions was for the extermination of unwanted female fetuses.

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<sup>39</sup> T. K. Rajalekshmi, "Womb as Graves," *Frontline Magazine* (Chennai: Kasturi & Sons Ltd., June 29, 2007), 3.

<sup>40</sup> Prafulla Das, "Orissa's unborn daughters," *Frontline Magazine* (Chennai: Kasturi & Sons Ltd, August 10, 2007), 27-28.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> Jane McNally, *ABUSE of Christian Women in India* (Delhi: ISPCK, 1999), 19.

There are not enough dark words to express the extent of female feticide in Orissa. It is surprising how a democratic nation like India could shut its eyes, and remain optimistic when millions of female babies are missing every year. According to UNICEF, 7000 female babies vanish each day. How does a mother allow the termination of her own? How does she not identify with her own sex? Only the Creator knows. Suffice it to say, the victim becomes the victimizer and the giver of life becomes the bringer of death. Thus the caste system becomes a culture of death, and its purveyors missionaries of misery. At the bottom of this scheme lies the woman, crushed to her soul, for whatever sins her progenitors had wrought. Savitha Hiremath reports in the Fortnightly Express:

At the India launch of its 'State of the world's children 2007' report last December, UNICEF said 7000 fewer girls are born in India each day than the global average would suggest... The findings were based on an analysis of Indian census data and a study published by British medical journal Lancet. The journal conducted a national survey of 1.1 million Indian households in 1998 and estimated that 10 million female fetuses had been aborted in 20 years.<sup>43</sup>

"The relative shortage of girls has resulted in early marriages, denial of school education to the girl child and excessive paranoia about sexual abuse of adolescent girls"<sup>44</sup>, writes T.K Rajalekshmi. Savita Hiremath, from Gita Aravamudan in her book, *Disappearing Daughters-The Tragedy of Female Feticide*, says, "Author Gita Aravamudan draws a reference from Atharva Veda which states: 'Let a female child be born somewhere else, here, let a male child be born'. As for what Manu Shastra says about the futility of being a woman is, the less discussed the better."<sup>45</sup> She reports in the Fortnightly Express:

And we all know why the scene is so macabre: the same socio-economic problems, the same inferior status lent to womanhood by religious texts with garbled incantations muttered through clenched lips, the same

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<sup>43</sup> Savitha Hiremath, *Woman's Life*, a fortnightly Express Report (Thiruvananthapuram: Express Publications Ltd, Tuesday, August 7, 2007), 3.

<sup>44</sup> T. K. Rajalekshmi, "Womb as Graves," *Frontline Magazine* (Chennai: Kasturi & Sons Ltd., June 29, 2007), 47.

<sup>45</sup> Savitha Hiremath, *Woman's Life*, a fortnightly Express Report (Thiruvananthapuram: Express Publications Ltd., Tuesday, August 7, 2007), 3.

obsession called son-preference that pervades every nook and corner of the society like mephitic air. Deafened by the din of their own sins, the perpetrators act with a messianic determination because they think the best way to relieve a girl child of all her impending life issues is not to eliminate the issues, but the life itself. That's the reason why economic status of the killers is hardly in question: because this poverty is one that emanates from their souls.<sup>46</sup>

If, in the pretext of freedom of religion, the government fails to act, the future consequences of demographic inequities will inevitably lead to societal instability. Many, including the U.N. have warned of the dire consequences of the government's failure to act. At the very least, there should be regulations imposed on the medical establishment, if they cannot police themselves. These are practical considerations. The issue of tackling an entrenched practice several millennia in the making is thornier. The New Indian Express reports, "Skewed sex ratio is assuming alarming proportions in the country with the United Nations predicting a margin of 25 million by 2030 between the ever-increasing male population and the conversely, dwindling number of female population."<sup>47</sup> The News Service continues on sex reduction and sex ratio at present, "More people are increasingly using ultrasound or amniocentesis to determine the sex of the fetus and abort the unwanted (female) fetuses. As a result, for every 200 births, there are 120 baby boys in some parts of the country."<sup>48</sup> Again the same News Service writes as reported by Christopher Guilmoto, demographer and author of regional reports for India: "The future deficit of adult women will affect the stability of the institution of marriage. The poorest of men will be unable to marry and this, in turn, will create conditions that promote sexual violence against women."<sup>49</sup> Given the current trend, it would not at all be surprising if instead of 'groom buying' the culture transformed itself

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> Indian Heading towards Polyandry, Warns UN, *The New Indian Express* (Thiruvananthapuram: Express Publications Ltd., Tuesday, Oct 30, 2007), 9.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

into a 'bride-buying' culture. The Express News Service of the New India Express under "Bride-buying catches on in U P" reports:

In a district where the urban sex ratio is the lowest in the country at 678/1000 and where tehsil (sub-district) has a sex ratio of 535/1000, the system of bride buying has become quite rampant in the last five years. Shahjahanpur's block Bhawaal Kheda has several villages where, due to the low sex ratio, men have been buying brides from states like West Bengal, Orissa, Jharkhand and Bihar. The price is anything between Rs.7,000 to Rs.10,000.<sup>50</sup>

Peter Wonacott reports:

India has long struggled with an inordinate number of new male births, and female infanticide – the killing of newborn baby girls – remains a problem. The abortion of female fetuses is a more recent trend, but unless urgent action is taken it's poised to escalate as the use of ultrasound services expands, the United Nation's Children Fund said in a 2007 report.<sup>51</sup>

The problem will accelerate if the government unwisely takes inadequate measures to fix the problem.

Human sacrifice is still prevalent in Kalahandi district and Orissa Sate. Parents who do not want their female child willingly sacrifice her to their goddess, Kali or Durga. According to legend, Kali thirsts for blood. The selling of female children is common in this state and in most of its districts. Most of these children are taken for sacrificial purposes. Those who do not have a child to sacrifice buy children and sacrifice them to the goddess Kali/ Durga so that they may be blessed with male children. Phulbani district is notorious for female sacrifice. Its reputation is so fearsome that women from other districts dare not pass through, even when there is a democratic government in Orissa. Rampur of Kalahandi is another place notorious for human sacrifice. Sambath

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<sup>50</sup> "Bride-buying Catches on in UP," *The New Indian Express* (Thiruvananthapuram: Express Publications Ltd., Wednesday, October 31, 2007), 13.

<sup>51</sup> Peter Wonacott, "India's Skewed Sex Ratio Puts GE Sales in the Spotlight," *The Wall Street Journal* (Wednesday, April 18, 2007), Section A, p. 14.

News paper reported on 11/06/07, "In Dasmanthapuram a man ... sold a 2 months girl baby and ran away from the place."<sup>52</sup> Sambath, daily newspaper continued:

A five year old girl was sacrificed in Nadipada near salonia market. Though they reported to the police, they did not take any action ... the name of the girl was Rasmitha, on June 8, 2007 ... police finally arrested Babaji Behra, the Brahmin priest and put him in jail.<sup>53</sup>

The daily newspaper Statesman reports, "One Bipin Gagarai (32) of Sahupur village who allegedly sold the infant to a person from Berhampur for Rs.1200."<sup>54</sup> The same newspaper on July 6<sup>th</sup>, 2007 reported:

While the KBK districts of Kalahandi, Belangir and Koraput region had earned notoriety for distress related deaths and sale of child, such instances in the so-called developed coastal districts continue to come as a rude shock. It also undermines the failure of the much proclaimed success of social security and health care schemes in the more accessible districts as exposed by the sale of a four day old infant here recently.<sup>55</sup>

Orissa is heading towards a crisis with rampant female killings, selling and sacrificing. Meanwhile, the government turns a deaf ear to the problem. Patriotism, culture and religion, along with socio-economic changes are not helping parents escape their pathetic condition. There remains an atmosphere of poor self awareness or equally limited self empowerment.

For the purpose of this research, the term Sati or Suttee is the Brahmin System of a wife immolating herself on her dead husband's funeral pyre. This is a practice that originated around AD 400, at the beginning of the Gupta Empire. This practice, as understood today, started to become more extensive after AD 500 and at the end of the Gupta Empire. In later times, Sati stones became shrines where the dead woman turned into an object of worship. The act of Sati is to emphasize the connection with the original marriage between the widow and the deceased.

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<sup>52</sup> *Sambath*, Daily Newspaper in Oriya, (Kalahandi, June 11, 2007), 3.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>54</sup> "Baby sold for Rs.1200," *The Statesman News Service* (Bhubaneswar, July 10, 2007),2.

<sup>55</sup> "Penury forces parents to sell 4-day-old baby," *The Statesman News Service* (Bhubaneswar, July 6, 2007), 2.

The immolation of women was a common practice in the Brahminical religion and society. Consequently, the practice was extended among the general Brahmanicalized population as well. It became a superstitious ritual rite for the widow. As noted, they believed that the spirit of the dead will not achieve Moksha (eternity) unless the dedicated wife sacrifices herself with the deceased on his funeral pyre. The widow would lose Moksha for all times unless she killed herself on her husband's funeral pyre. But if the wife dies, this practice does not apply to the husband. While reflecting peerless hypocrisy, it was enforced with ruthless efficiency by the Brahmanic elite. The British government tried to abolish this abominable practice of the native religion with little success. In the republic of India this practice continues to happen sporadically, especially in North India. Mansoor Moadel writes:

In the early nineteenth century, a British authority reported that in the districts of the Bengal no less than 5,997 widows were burnt alive in 10 years, and too often the unfortunate women were induced to submit to this rite or were thrown by force amidst the flames of the burning pile. In 1829 Lord Bentinck forbade Suttee, and threatened to death penalty all those who were in any way connected with it in the future.<sup>56</sup>

Mansoor continued to write: "the fight against the abomination of the Suttee was one of the first of the great humanitarian movements set in motion by the missionaries."<sup>57</sup> The British government and Christian missionaries fought against the evil practice of sati with little success. The religiously derived tradition of sati purported to purge the woman's sins and guarantee eternal salvation and marital bliss. Its so-called moral mandate further served to subjugate and minimized women. Gandhi said:

Satihood is the acme of purity. This purity cannot be attained or realized by dying. It can be attained only through constant striving, constant immolation of the spirit from day to day. ... Self immolation at the death of the husband is not a sign of enlightenment, but of gross ignorance as to the nature of the soul. The soul is immortal, unchangeable and immanent. It does not perish with the physical body but journeys on from one mortal

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<sup>56</sup> Mansoor Moadel, "Religion and Women, Islamic Modernism Versus fundamentalism," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* (March 1998), 4 of 21.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

frame to another, till it completely emancipates itself from earthly bondage. ... How can suicide be, then, justified in the light of these facts? We have never heard of a husband mounting the funeral pyre of his deceased wife. It may, therefore, be taken for granted that the practice of the widow immolating in superstitious ignorance and the blind egotism of man ... it can only be regarded as barbarous in the present age.<sup>58</sup>

Lalrinawmi Ralte says, "There is no history of a husband mounting the funeral pyre of his deceased wife. It clearly talks about the immoralized, dehumanized attitude towards women in the name of religion and culture."<sup>59</sup>

Gandhi brought much needed clarity to this ignorant practice. For the ignorant, superstition and legend lend themselves to greater credibility than reason. How many Indian husbands would, for love or eternity, immolate themselves on their wives' funeral pyres? Recently, during a parliament debate, a senior parliamentarian shamefully rejected the implementation of a law to abolish Sati. If this attitude is prevalent among the educated parliamentarians of India, what would be the ignorant man's attitude toward women? Lalrinawmi Ralte quotes Gabriele Dielrich's paper on Women and Religious Identities in India after Ayodhya: "In the debate on Sati, Vijay Raje Scindia has gone on record saying that Sati was our cultural heritage and fundamental right of Hindu women to commit, if need to be safeguarded."<sup>60</sup> Vikas Dhoot and Ravish Tiwari write to The New Indian Express:

The slew of amendments proposed in the law to prevent Sati have run into resistance from within the Cabinet on two grounds-one, essentially legal and the second, on its implementation. Amendments to the commission of Sati(Prevention) Act, 1987, that propose to call Sati a murder and increase prison terms for those committing as well as glorifying the practice came up for cabinet clearance on last Tuesday. But the cabinet sent back the proposals to the Ministry of Women and Child Development, asking it to work with the Law Ministry to redraft the amendments. Official Sources told Express that Union Minister for Mines Sis Ram Ola, who hails from Jhunjhunu in Rajasthan, wanted to know that if the law were to outlaw glorification of any kind, what would happen to the existing Sati temples or how would government deal with the age-

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<sup>58</sup> Mahatma Gandhi, *To the Women*, ed. Anand T. Hingorani (Allahabad: Law Journal Press, 1941),136.

<sup>59</sup> Lalrinawmi Ralte; *Women Re-shaping Theology* (Delhi: ISPCK, 2004), 32.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

old tradition of worship at these temples. Speaking to Express over phone ... Ola made the same point 'As far as Sati temples go, how can one stop the 500 year old tradition of worshipping at these temples? ... 'Only the arrangements after 1987 should be stopped, even the group of Ministers recommended the same'. Another minister, Kapil Sibal, pointed to holes in the proposed Bill.<sup>61</sup>

People who shamelessly defend the practice of Sati even in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century do not seem to immolate their own family members. While pandering to votes, they claim the virtuous mantle of tradition, as barbaric as it is. What these educated elite may not do to their own, they allow to be perpetrated unmolested on the less fortunate, uninterrupted by any notion of duty or law.

One of the foremost things Aryanization developed in society was the subjugation of women by depriving education and knowledge in the name of religion. The Brahminical religion kept women in utter darkness until missionaries reached out to this neglected segment of the population. Before the outsiders came, it was considered sinful for a woman to learn to read or write. Women were only to produce male generations and to serve as slaves to men and to their families. At every level, the caste system induced a Darwinian struggle for supremacy and survival that, when the dust settled, left women at the bottom of the heap. The 'weaker vessel' was thus ravaged for all time. If the women of the society were educated, the practices of Sati, female infanticide, female feticide, child marriage and the other forms of female oppression would have probably never taken root. It is a stain on our society that cannot be erased from the soul of our country. Mansoor says as reported by another reporter:

Another report indicated, 'a most bitter prejudice exists in the minds of the people in many parts of India against female education, and this prejudice is deep-rooted ... These people think that the highest duty of a woman is to marry, and devote herself with all her thoughts and energies to the comfort of her family. If she should learn to read, they say she will be so occupied with her books that she will neglect these duties'. ... Religion or

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<sup>61</sup> Vikas Dhoot and Ravish Tiwari, *The New Indian Express* (Thiruvananthapuram: Express Publications Ltd., Tuesday, September 18, 2007), 7.



Laws of the country were also criticized for declaring all females to be incapable of acquiring knowledge.<sup>62</sup>

Gandhi quotes from a letter of Dr. Muthulekshmi Reddi, the well known social worker of Madras:

Should not the members of the Nationalist party, we mean the Congress, burn with a desire and enthusiasm to find an immediate remedy for all these social evils, the source of our national weakness and the cause of our present degradation, or at least educate the masses to liberate their women from the servile bondage to which they are subject, that they may develop to their full physical, mental, moral and spiritual height, so that they may set an example of courage and wisdom, and, above all, that they may as wives and mothers rightly and truly fulfill the sacred task of training, guiding, and forming the daily habits and character of the future administrators of India?<sup>63</sup>

Dr. Muthulekshmi urged India to liberate her women first from their bondage of illiteracy and ignorance forced on them by the same men who were fighting for national freedom. She pleaded to educate those men on the need of their women's education, and writes again:

If the members of the congress believe that freedom is the birth –right of every nation and individual, and if they are determined to achieve that at any cost, should they not first liberate their women from the evil customs and conventions that restrict their all-round healthy growth, which remedy lies in their own hands.<sup>64</sup>

The women of India are restrained, deprived and bound by their socio-religious customs and culture. Muthulekshmi continues: "Swami Vivekananda has said: 'That country and that nation which do not respect woman have never become great, nor will ever be in future ... If you do not raise the women, who are the living embodiments of the divine mother, don't think that you have only other way to rise'."<sup>65</sup> It only follows that the more the woman of the house is educated, the greater the growth potential of the house, of the family and the potential of society. No product of an abused woman can be made

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<sup>62</sup> Mansoor Moadel, "Religion and Women: Islamic modernism versus fundamentalism," *Journal for scientific study of Religion* (March 1998), 4.

<sup>63</sup> Mahatma Gandhi, *To The Women*, ed. Anand T.Hingorani (Allahabad : Allahabad Law Journal Press, 1974), 161.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid..

whole. An enlightened woman forms the bedrock of a healthy society. Calling ignorance enlightenment only darkens the blight that has fallen on the land.

Macdelene's view of education from a mission perspective is, "Today our education policy needs to be corrected to a mission perspective, and serve women and the downtrodden masses, and so to build the Kingdom of God on unbiased values."<sup>66</sup>

Missionary mindedness is important in liberating the downtrodden and unfortunate.

Macdelene again continued with her opinion that the rich and the affordable reaped education and its opportunities. The poor and the unfortunate were and are pushed back by money and power. She says:

The missionaries left, and their vision to establish the Kingdom of God on the earth through education came under threat because of law suits and unseemly wrangles over admission policies. Poor families could not provide their children with proper school equipment. Only the rich could tap this modern opportunity for their daughters. Elite girls advanced careers.<sup>67</sup>

The highly touted Hindutva social culture highly oppresses tender hearts and minds. Young children, especially girls, if by chance think of going to school are presented with many hurdles. Premdas and D. Patel of Ramabai Mukti Mission write of the following conditions as prevailing in rural and tribal India:

Almost totally illiterate, the people practice traditions passed down from ancient-generations. ... Most children do not attend school; females face discrimination. In many areas, girls are forbidden to attend school. Women must keep their heads and faces covered ... The people are divided into two distinct groups, high caste and low caste. ... Schools only admit high caste children. If a low cast child is for some reason allowed to attend, he is made to sit outside the classroom and must try to hear the teacher from outside the window.<sup>68</sup>

The Indian Brahminical caste system, with its educational deprivation, dragged lands like Orissa that were once great into pitch darkness and poverty. A feudal system of

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<sup>66</sup> Macdelene Cambell, "Modern education and women in India," *International Bulletin of Research Journal, Transformation* 19/1 (January 2000) 71.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

<sup>68</sup> Premdas and D. Patel, *Pandita Ramabai Mukti Mission Newsletter*, January 2006, 1.

ignorance was created and is maintained to this day. Girls are to be tied to their overlord at a tender age. Especially in the lower castes, there was no way out. This feudal system stretches from the marriage bed to the overlords of society, the Brahmins, or upper castes. As lower caste members such as the untouchables must slink into the shadows on sight of the upper caste, so must a woman be to the man of the house. This is more than figurative in Orissa. The high castes own the land and powerful positions. Their sons and daughters are educated in America, England and the West. They live lavishly and roam around the world. If they study in India, they do so in the best private schools. Their fingers are on all the levels of power. They are often above the law. They organize political parties, including the most powerful in the land, such as BJP (a nationalistic party), Congress, RSS (the parent party of the BJP) and Bajrang Dal. They rule the cities, towns and villages. This is especially true of the research population of Junagarh. The low castes of these lands are helpless, their women more so. Without divine intervention through the concerned and the committed, little can be done as there is neither the will nor the desire by society at large to advantage these disadvantaged. About this custom, Rev. Z. F. Griffin writes, "who ever heard of such a thing, as girls going to school ...? Besides, did not the shastras say that if a woman learned to read she shall become a widow? She must never even talk of such a thing."<sup>69</sup>

Alice B. Van Doren says, "A Hindu girl of high family was allowed to go to college."<sup>70</sup> She continues,

Indian leaders look with alarm at the possibility of a female India of the type of the West. They would like the purdah system to be removed, females to be educated to get the franchise, and still for them to keep their modesty. There are many who would like to break this barrier, but it would be disastrous for India to arrive at such a state within fifteen or twenty years when ninety nine out of one hundred women are illiterate.<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> Rev. Z. F. Griffin, *The Life of a Hindu Woman* (Keuka Park, New York, 1927), 15.

<sup>70</sup> Alice B. Van Doren, *Lighted to Lighten* (Massachusetts: The central committee on the united study of foreign missions, 1922), 28.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

Now, even in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, the literacy rates of the people of Orissa is far below other states in India. This difference is most notable among women there. It is very high in districts such as Kalahandi, where the Tribal and Rural population is greater. Lalatendu Acharya writes:

India has approximately 23 million out-of-school children aged 6-14 years, of which about 60 percent are girls. In Orissa, there are 320,000 out-of-school children, of which almost 200,000 are girls. There is a huge gap between the educational achievement of boys and girls. Twenty out of the state's thirty districts have female literacy rates lower than the national average. Only 44 percent of the children enrolled are girls and tribal girls make up 18 percent of the total girls enrolled.<sup>72</sup>

Child marriage is as prevalent in Orissa and Kalahandi as it ever was. Kalahandi, or Orissa, is still in the dark ages concerning child marriage. By law, a girl under 18 is considered under-aged and is prohibited to marry. But yet, most of the women this researcher counseled and communicated with were married before the age of 14. Although abolished by law, religious constitutions enforce child marriage. Helen Barret Montgomery writes:

If a daughter is married at the age of six, the father is certain to ascend to the highest heaven. If she is not married before seven, the father will only reach the second heaven, and if she is not married until the age of ten, the father can only attain the lowest place assigned to the blessed. If a girl is not married until she is eleven years of age, all her progenitors for six generations will suffer pains and penalties. Manu V, pp.147-156. (in part)<sup>73</sup>

Gandhi in his book, *To The Women*, wrote, "This custom of child-marriage is both a moral as well as a physical evil. For, it undermines our morals and induces physical degeneration. By countenancing such customs, we recede from God as well as Swaraj."<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> Lalatendu Acharya, "Orissa felicitates girl students from disadvantaged groups," available from [www.unicef.org/india/education\\_1056.htm](http://www.unicef.org/india/education_1056.htm); Internet; accessed 3 September 2007.

<sup>73</sup> Helen Barret Montgomery, *Western Women in the Eastern Lands* (New York, The McMillan Company, 1911), 58.

<sup>74</sup> Mahatma Gandhi, *To the Woman*, ed. Anand. T. Hingorani (Allahabad: Allahabad Law Journal Press, 1941), 122.

Many missionaries and learned men of India stood against these degraded activities of India. Girls who should be in the school studying and playing with peers are tied by the neck to much older men with yellow knot called 'thali', which symbolizes a goddess. That girl once married in this way is thrown into a dark room to experience degradation at the hands of her new lord. It is there that the rape of her body and soul is completed.

The morality of the heart, as the Creator gives us to understand, transcends the base teachings of men from ignorant, bygone eras. Without compassion and mercy, man's greatest achievements are as chaff before the wind. Without it, evil takes the form of culture and tradition. Greed for wealth and power then entrenches these views and culminates into the silent holocaust it has become. The voices of hundreds of millions of women have been prematurely and brutally silenced by the evil creed of men. Only when the depths of this depravity has been brought out from the dark mumblings of priests into the crystal light of reason and compassion can this evil be purged from the land. Religious evil teachings are to be questioned and be removed from the hearts of the public.

There are many consequences to child marriage. Some of them include: 1) Increased illiteracy. (2) Poor health for the Child-mother and her children. (3) Ill-equipped for proper growth of family and society. (4) Poverty. (5) Increased death rate at child birth to both child and mother. (6) Female feticide and infanticide. (7) Increase in prostitution. (8) Mental and physical abuse. (8) Enforced widowhood.

Child marriage was the major cause of maternal and infant mortality. There was a pervasive fear among these married children that they would die at childbirth. Many Indian parents burned with the desire to be rid of their female children, even as infants. The consequence of infant marriages was that if their designated groom deceased soon after, they would become widows until they died. They were then cloistered, as if

cursed, even as tiny children. This national blemish will be discussed as long as man remains a moral creature. Even through the prism of cultural relativity there is no excusing the exploitation of infants and innocent children. It will be spoken of for generations.

Alice B. Van Doren writes, "Meenachi is twelve and the freedom of the long street is hers no more."<sup>75</sup> She continues: "So Meenachi, the bride, passes out into the unknown of death. No one has taught her to say in the valley of the shadow, I will fear no evil, for thou art with me. The terrors of life are with her, but its consolations are not hers."<sup>76</sup>

The tradition was that all female children were to be given in marriage by age 13, most before puberty. From the confines of her father's home where at least innocence was maintained, a girl's world underwent a violent transformation. Women did not have the luxury of childhood. Mrs. Marcus writes, "All Hindu girls are either wives or widows before they reach the age of fifteen."<sup>77</sup>

Then she narrates:

In one of the hospitals a young girl of twelve years of age was brought into the maternity ward. She gave birth to a little child but in its birth her sufferings were so extreme that the doctor and nurses in attendance quailed at the sight of it. The doctor said with much emotion and great indignation, 'Government should put a stop to such a thing'.<sup>78</sup>

While women must marry while still children, the custom was for men to be older. Sometimes, these men would literally be grandfathers; and this was religiously sanctioned. "The deepest blot upon the people of India is that all but universal custom of child marriage by which babes of a dozen years are still given to men of fifty", says Helen Barret Montgomery.<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>75</sup>Alice B. Van Doren, *Lighted to Lighten* (Massachusetts: The Central Committee on the United Study of Foreign Missions), 23.

<sup>76</sup>Ibid.

<sup>77</sup>Mrs. Marcus B. Fuller, *The wrongs of Indian Womanhood* (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company), 183.

<sup>78</sup>Ibid.

<sup>79</sup>Helen Barret Montgomery, *Western Women in the Eastern Land* (New York: McMillan Company, 1911). 57.

All the Indian wisemen of yore concurred that the time for a girl to marry was before puberty. Proposals could take place before conception if the stars were right. If the signs indicated that an infant was to marry a grandfather, the arrangements were made accordingly. The child never had a voice in the matter. She often cannot conceive of what is to come until she is there. Then she merely hopes her next life will be better. At worse, she would resign her current life to physical, emotional and sexual abuse, possibly even violent death. She rarely knew its horrors until she got there.

According to the Republic India's shared Act of 1978 a man's marriage age is legally fixed to be 21 and above, and a woman's age 18 and above. This should have abolished child marriage. Nevertheless, Rural India does not care about this law. Old patterns of life continue. Old men marrying little girls has contributed to the large population of widows and beggars in India. Jane McNally notes:

In rural areas the new law is frequently by-passed, but extremely young brides live with their parents until puberty. The marrying of young girls to older men has resulted in a large population of widows in the Hindu community, many of whom live in dire poverty and beggary.<sup>80</sup>

Z.F. Griffin, narrates the astonishing story of a 12 year old wife who becomes a grandmother at 24: "And now what I say of child marriage! ... Twelve years old this child wife was, but many in India are only eleven or even ten ... there was a grandmother in one of our houses. How old do you think? Twenty-four years old".<sup>81</sup>

Even in the highly educated circle of Brahmins such as Pandita Ramabai and other Brahminical child-wives the exploitation of girl children was astounding. Robert Eric Frykenberg writes about Pandita Ramabai's father who married her mother when she was only 9 years of old, and her father was 44:

In 1839 Anant Shastri acquired his second wife, Ramabai's mother. ... This Brahman, named Madhavarao Abhyankar, became so impressed by Anant Shastri's learning and out look that, on the spot, he offered him the hand of his nine-year-old daughter. As Ramabai put it nearly fifty years late, All (was) settled in an hour or so; next day the marriage concluded;

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<sup>80</sup> Jane McNally, *ABUSE of Christian Women in India* (Delhi: ISPCK, 1999), 15.

<sup>81</sup> Z.F. Griffin, *The Life of a Hindu woman* (Keuka Park, New York, 1927), 20.

and the little girl was placed in the possession of a stranger, who took her nearly nine hundred miles away from her home.<sup>82</sup>

To murder a child before it has awareness seems almost merciful compared to the violent emotional dissonance that premature separation creates in a young child.

How could such a child ever truly become a woman? Gandhi, the father of India, said:

I will attempt to bring home to them the enormity of their fortunes with child wives, and will warn them that there is no expiation for that sin unless their wives fit, not only to bear children but also to bring them up properly, and unless in the meantime they live a life of absolute celibacy.<sup>83</sup>

While the practice has changed such that girls are marrying at older ages, in remote corners of India the practice continues unabated. This is true of states like Orissa. This uncivilized practice ensures that women remain bound in ignorance and servitude.

While it is tempting to think that child marriage is primarily a 19<sup>th</sup> century phenomena, nowhere else on earth is it more prevalent, than in India. Indeed, the reporter, Antara Dev Sen notes, “For 80 years, we have been bleating on about banning child marriage. Yet even today half the women in India are married off before the legal age of 18, largely because we have not had the political will to criminalize the practice.”<sup>84</sup> While politicians rush to ban pedophilia, legalized pedophilia exists in the form of adherence to the twisted tradition of child marriage.

Perhaps the most terrible affront to womanhood that Brahmanism affords is what the Hindu teacher Mazoomdar called “consecrated prostitution.” In many great temples to which pilgrims resort are kept throngs of young women to service these pilgrims. These young girls are consecrated to the service of the god in childhood. They are ‘married’ to him, and by their law are obliged to prostitute themselves on behalf of the god to the pilgrims and priests. These girls are beautifully dressed, bedecked in jewels,

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<sup>82</sup> Eric Frykenberg, *Pandita Ramabai's America* (Grand Rapids: William B. Erdmans Publishing Company, 2003), 2.

<sup>83</sup> Mahatma Gandhi, *To the Women*, ed. Anand T. Hingorami (Allahabad: Allahabad Law Journal Press, 1941), 23.

<sup>84</sup> Dev Sen, Antara. “Coming of Age,” *The Week* (February 24, 2008): 61.



trained in all the sensual arts that attract, and bring in great revenue to the temple treasury. They are taught by the temple priests that they accumulate great stores of blessings to themselves for a future state of bliss. Being married to a god, they can never be widowed. The temple priest as well as the men who come to worship marry their god through his 'wives'. They believe it is their duty to satisfy their gods by having sex with the temple prostitutes. The exchange also transfers monetary funds into the temple coffers. In this entire exchange, neither god, nor pilgrim nor priest is forced. Only the young woman does not enter into this transaction of her own accord.

This practice is very much alive in places like Kalahandi and Orissa. There are many reasons why the tradition persists. This researcher has discovered that the most common reasons (among her clients in Junagarh) involve the superstitious adherence to religious stigmas, which they cling to out of fear. Many writers including Mahatama Gandhi waged battle against this evil practice, but couldn't succeed. The reasons for failure are: (1) The religion is instilled in the heart of the people, especially women. Fearing rebirth in a similar or worse state, women maintain the status quo, and even teach it to the next generation. (2) Parents fear their deities, especially when they get sick or when a personal calamity occurs in the family. (3) To avoid the deity's anger, they sacrifice their daughters who are considered to be of less benefit to the family. (4) A female child who is sold to the temple cannot cost the family a dowry. They are 'married' to the deity as well as to its male followers down from the priest of the temple, to the least of its male congregants. (5) Ignorance and illiteracy induces poor parents to cater to the religious elite. Alice Van Doren is lamenting over the evil practice of temple prostitution:

Worse is the fate of those whose Karma condemns them to a life of religious prostitution. Perhaps the first-born son of the family lies near to death. The parents vow a frantic vow to the deity of the local temple. 'Save our Son's life, O Govinda; our youngest daughter shall be dedicated to thy service'. The son recovers, the vow must be fulfilled, and

bright-eyed, laughing Lekshmi, aged eight, is led to the temple put through the mockery of ceremony of marriage to the black and misshapen image in the inmost Shrine, and thenceforth trained to a religious service of nameless infamy. ... yet in countless temples, under the brightness of Indian Sun, the iniquity protected by vested interests, goes on and no hand is lifted to stay. Suppose each American church to shelter its own house of prostitution, its forces recruited from the young girls of the congregation, their services at the disposal of its worshippers. The thought is too black for utterance; yet just so in the life of India has the service of the gods been prostituted to the lusts of men.<sup>85</sup>

Amy Carmichael left her own country, Ireland, at the age of 30 with a desire to serve the people of a darkened world. She ended up serving the innocent and helpless little lives which were thrown out of temple courts by the hundreds every day with the assistance of many local workers and agents. Finding many thousands of them, she gave them new life. When she realized the terrible, uncivilized traditions and rituals practiced under the guise of religion, she was horrified but she worked untiringly to rescue as much as possible.

The Trumpet reports:

Hinduism, one of the oldest religions that originated in and was largely confined to India, encouraged temple slavery of child-prostitution perpetrated in the name of religion, where little girls were sold to 'marry' the Brahmin temple priests. Amy was horrified by such practices and knew this was why she had been called to India. Little by little, children began to arrive at the mission, and the "family" steadily increased. One, of her early books 'Things as they are' told the truth behind temple practices and so shocked the publisher that he refused to publish it. Later, however, it was published and stirred the Christian world to pray for India.<sup>86</sup>

Devadasis or temple prostitutes are found in all big temples. Gandhi expressed his indignation at this evil and abominable practice stating:

Whether they be known as Devadasis or by any other name, the problem is the same. It is matter of bitter shame and sorrow, of deep humiliation, that a number of women have to sell their chastity for man's lust. Manu, the law giver, will have to pay a dreadful penalty for the degradation he has imposed upon the so called weaker sex. When women, freed from

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<sup>85</sup> Alice Van Doren, *Lighted to Lighten* (Massachusetts: The Central Committee on the United Study of Foreign Missions, 1922), 26.

<sup>86</sup> "Eminent Women in Bible and History," *The Trumpet* (Kumbanad: Vani Printings, May 2007), 14.

man's snares, rises to the full height and rebels against men's legislation ... Let the Indian man ponder over the fate of the thousands of sisters who are destined to a life of shame for his unlawful and immoral indulgence. The pity of it is that the vast majority of the men, who visit these pestilential haunts, are married men and, therefore, commit a double sin. They sin against their wives to whom they have sworn allegiance, and then sin against the sisters whose purity they are bound to guard with as much jealousy as that of their own blood sisters.<sup>87</sup>

"I cannot write all I have learnt about this social disease, this moral leprosy,"<sup>88</sup> said Gandhi.

There are 3 types of temple girls. They are Devadasi, Jogini and Mathamma.

Devadasi: Girls dedicated to deity without their consent. She is to be used by the men who come to worship this deity. They are married to the deity for life and cannot renounce her state. She becomes the common sexual property of male followers of the deity. She cannot earn any money.

Maggie Black writes in the internet:

These Davadasi practices share key common features: These include the dedication of the girl, her subsequent 'marriage' to the deity and her deflowering immediately after the ceremony or at puberty-usually by family members, village elders or a man who has paid for the privilege. Most girls are 'married' between the age of 8 and 12 and initiated by the age of 15. After this they are considered available for sexual use by men of the community.<sup>89</sup>

The practice of temple prostitution is a religious institution which is a blight on human history. It brings shame to the national character. Leaders of the nation need to take a no tolerance approach to the eradication of this humiliating practice.

Enforced widowhood has been an oppressive practice of this land. Kalahandi is near the forefront of such practices. Not surprisingly, women are prohibited from re-marriage but not men. As this researcher has noted elsewhere, there is no age limit to

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<sup>87</sup> Mahatma Gandhi, *To the Women*, ed. Anand T. Hingorani (Allahabad: Allahabad Law Journal Press, 1941), 166-167.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid.

<sup>89</sup> Maggie Black, available from [www.antislavery.org/homepage/resources/PDF/PDFritualslavery.htm](http://www.antislavery.org/homepage/resources/PDF/PDFritualslavery.htm); Internet; accessed on October 10, 2007.

when a man may remarry, even at death's door, so as not to be a widower. The great revivalist Pandita Rama Bai's father had married a nine year old child when he was 44 years old. This practice though unbelievable was common. When child marriage is enforced and practiced from after birth until twelve or fifteen years of age, it is understood that widowhood, even early in their married life. The religion evolved a tradition from this tragedy. One of the sacred books of the Hindu religion, 'Manu Script,' emphasizes the destiny of women in widowhood. The religion teaches that widowhood is caused by sins in her previous birth. Montgomery quotes from Rama Bai, "Widowhood is regarded as a punishment for a horrible crime or crimes committed by a woman in her former existence upon the earth. Disobedience or disloyalties to the husband or murdering him in his earlier existence are the chief crimes punished in the present birth by widowhood."<sup>90</sup> So they should reap its consequences. During widowhood, they are not permitted to wear ornaments or colored, decorated cloths, but only white attire. They must live a solitary life. They cannot attend functions. They should not be seen by any man or woman in the early morning as this first sight (Kazhcha) is counted as a bad omen. They cannot re-marry because they are cursed by their god/deity. They lead a pitiful existence. Montgomery quotes again from Ramabai's High Caste Women:

Her (widow's) life then, destitute as it is of the latest literary knowledge, void of all hope, empty of every pleasure and social advantage becomes intolerance, a curse to her and to the society at large. It is not an uncommon thing for a young widow without occupation that may satisfy her mind and heart, and unable longer to endure slights and suspicions to which she is perpetually subjected, to escape from her prison house. But when she gets from it, where shall we go? No respectable family even of a lower caste will have her for a servant. She is completely ignorant of any art by which she can make an honest living. She has nothing but a single (coarse) garment. Starvation and death stare her in the face. The only alternative before her is either to commit suicide, or worse still, accept a life of shame.<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>90</sup> Helen Barret Montgomery, *Western Women in the Eastern Lands* (New York: The McMillan Company, 1911), 61-62.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid.

This solitary widow is scorned by her society, and bereft of any comforting hand. She wastes away, a ghost of a human. Gandhi said:

No outside imposition can cure Hindu society of the enforced widowhood of girls, who don't even know what marriage is. The reform can come first by the force of enlightened public opinion among Hindus, secondly by parents recognizing the duty of marrying their girl widows.<sup>92</sup>

Rev. Z. F. Griffin writes:

There are no single girls in a Hindu household. Every girl is either legally married or dedicated to a life of shame. Hindu widows can not marry a second time, therefore every man from ages of a boy up to that of an old man must marry a little girl.<sup>93</sup>

Gandhi said about widows: "If her husband dies before she is old enough to understand what a husband is, she becomes in very fact a widow and as a punishment for the sin which was responsible for the death of her husband, she must forever remain a widow."<sup>94</sup>

There is a report from Marcus Fuller during the rule of the British that states: "There is a population over 287,000,000 of which over 140,000,000 are women. ...Among these women we find, by the same census, nearly 23,000,000 widows. ...in India to whom the existing Hindu law is an injustice and a wrong. This Hindu law, the government recognizes, and accepts."<sup>95</sup> These widows, shunned by society, scurrying around to find sustenance, limited to the confines of their hovels, often only find respite with suicide. Is it any wonder that many chose to commit sati?

The women of Kalahandi suffer many forms of torture. Some of them are mentioned earlier under dowry tortures, child marriage, temple prostitution, female feticide (tortures the mother) and infanticide. These practices explain the beaten-down mentality of the women of these lands. Torture keeps a person in submission. Women

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<sup>92</sup> Mahatma Gandhi, *To the Women*, ed. Anand T. Hingorani (Allahabad : Allahabad Law Journal Press, 1941), 134.

<sup>93</sup> Rev. Z. F. Griffin, *The life of a Hindu woman* (Keuka Park, New York, 1927),29.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid.

<sup>95</sup> Mrs. Marcus B. Fuller, *The Wrongs of Indian Womanhood* (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1900), 182.

are victims of humiliation, exploitation, violence and rape: all forms of torture. Physical torture is common in the form of domestic violence or societal violence. Domestic violence can take the form of wife battering for dowry demand, child molestation and other abuses arising from ill habits such as alcoholism, drug addiction and so on, by husbands forced to marry women they do not love which then lead into lack of status, lack of good morale and poor self image on the part of the women. All these lead to female oppression. Dr. Alhadini Dhir wrote an article on the internet for the Orissa Review on June 2005 as:

An alcoholic beats his wife and children. There are incidents where under the influence of alcohol a father raped his own daughter. Alcoholism increases violence and consequently family interruption takes place ... child and adolescents rape are on the rise, about 58% below 16 years. In recent years girl children in the age group of 6-12 years have been more victimized. Custodial rape is extremely heinous ... witnesses refuse to testify against offenders.<sup>96</sup>

He continues to say:

Domestic violence is one of the greatest obstacles to gender equality and women enjoying their fundamental human rights with equal protection under the law and right to live in liberty. Domestic violence may be of many forms such as social, emotional, intellectual and physical. The following are the physical forms:

- (a) Physical violence: Which may lead to assault, serious injury or burns even to death of the victim.
- (b) Sexual violence: Means robbing the dignity of women not only by indecent behavior but also an extreme form of rape or ravishing her....<sup>97</sup>

In the daily news, *New Indian Express*, Bharti Nath wrote the following about the oppressive assaults and abuses upon women:

Innumerable women silently suffer assaults and abuses everyday inside every second home across the country. Indian women by nature are submissive and bear with a grin or silent-tears, the violence-mental and physical perpetrated by men.<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>96</sup> Dr. Alhadini Dhir, "Violence Against Women," *Orissa Review* (June 2005), 32-35.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid., 35.

<sup>98</sup> Bharti Nath, *The New Indian Express* (Thiruvananthapuram: Express Publications Ltd., October 2, 2007), 3.

Gandhi quoted the following from Dr. S. Muthulekshmi Reddi's letter, "Is Hindu Society justified in tolerating or conniving at a custom that in the name of a religion condemns innocent young girls to a life of degradation and vice?"<sup>99</sup> Again he quoted her question, "Don't you think that their very individuality is being recklessly crushed under the burden of customs and conventions."<sup>100</sup> The Indian male must recognize the shame and hypocrisy that is his when he touts the virtues of his culture while keeping the Indian woman in bondage. Gandhi said, "Of all the evils for which man has made himself responsible, none is so degrading, so shocking or so brutal, as his abuse of the better half of humanity, to me, the female sex, not the weaker sex."<sup>101</sup> Gandhi quoted the long letter of a bereaved brother, describing the miseries of his married sister:

[M]y sister was married to a man whose character was hidden from us. ... He would also whip her, make her stand, starve her, etc. She was tied to a post to compel her to witness his debaucheries. My sister is heart broken. Her lamentations make us feel wretched. We are helpless. ... This is one of the most shameful aspects of Hinduism, where woman is entirely at the mercy of man, and has no rights and privileges...but a woman, once married is at the utter mercy of her Lord. Thousands of such women are groaning and weeping. As long as Hinduism is not purged of these and other such evils, can there be any hope of progress?<sup>102</sup>

Women in India often accept these tortures as a normal part of their experienced growth. For example, Jane McNally quotes a missionary surgeon's experience on this matter:

As to beating of wives ... I remember one of our nursing tutors telling me, when I noticed some bruises on her, "Oh, my husband hit me. It just shows that he loves me. If he didn't beat me once in a while that would mean that he didn't care about me!" And she was quite proud of this. Other nurses standing around, also married, agreed that this was true.<sup>103</sup>

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<sup>99</sup> Mahatma Gandhi, *To the Women*, ed. Anand T. Hingorani (Allahabad : Allahabad Law Journal Press), 1941), 160.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid.

<sup>103</sup> Jane McNally, *ABUSE of Christian women in India* (Delhi: ISPCK, 1999), 6-7.

The above narratives also reveal a tendency to treat the Indian woman as a slave. She labors to serve her husband in the house; and out of the house (if the household is poor), given her lack of education, her labor takes the form of hard physical toil. Whether by mental or physical abuse and torture or by hard, toiling labor, the Indian woman, now as then remains a beast of burden.

As in many other parts of the state and country, in Kalahandi a woman is placed under the total control and will of her husband after her marriage. He is her god and her lord. She must conform to his will. A woman is a slave to him and to his family as long as she lives. According to the Hindu religious code of Manu, there is no greater sacrifice for a woman than worshiping her husband. She must melt her will to his, but not he to hers. Marcus quotes the following from Manu and Skanda Purana:

Manu's Code of Law prescribes: ...[A] good woman should always worship her husband like a god. For woman, there is no independent sacrifice, vow, or fast. A woman will be exalted in heaven by the mere fact that she obediently served her husband.<sup>104</sup> Skanda purana says, "Let a wife who wishes to perform sacred ablution, wash the feet of her lord, and drink the water; for a husband is to a wife greater than Shankar or Vishnu. The husband is her god, and priest, and religion: wherefore abandoning everything else, she ought chiefly to worship her husband".<sup>105</sup>

Helen Barret writes: "A woman is not allowed to go out of the house without the consent of her husband; she may not laugh without a veil over her face or look out of a door or a window."<sup>106</sup> Rev. E. Storrow says, "A husband must be constantly worshipped as a god by a faithful wife."<sup>107</sup>

As per the enforced Brahminical religio-cultural system, a woman must have no will of her own. The husband is the lord and master. Rev. E. Storrow again says, "No

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<sup>104</sup> Patrick Olivelle. *"Manu's' Code of Law: A Critical Edition and Translation of the Manava-Dharmasastra,"* 5:144 &145. Oxford University Press. 2005, 146.

<sup>105</sup> Marcus B. Fuller's quote from Skanda Purana in his *The wrongs of Indian Womanhood*, (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1900), 276.

<sup>106</sup> Helen Barret Montgomery, *Western Women in Eastern Lands* (New York: The McMillan Company, 1911), 57.

<sup>107</sup> Rev. E. Storrow, *Our Sisters in India* (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1911), 22.



sacrifice, no vow, no fast must be performed by women apart from their husbands. ...At her pleasure let her emaciate her body by living on pure flowers, roots and fruits.”<sup>108</sup>

Rev. Storrow quotes from the Gentoo code saying: “A man both day and night must keep his wife so much in subjection that she by no means becomes mistress of her own actions. If the wife have her own free will ... behave amiss. A woman shall never go out of the house without the consent of her husband.”<sup>109</sup> The most wretched or crippled of men is considered a god. Rev. Storrow quotes from the Padma Purana of Hindu religion, “...but never shall his wife regard him but as her god.”<sup>110</sup> Again Rev. Storrow quotes from The Skanda Purana, as cited by Horace Hayman Wilson, “Her husband is her god and guru, teacher and guide, and religion and its services; wherefore, abandoning everything else, she ought chiefly to worship her husband. To well-born women their husband is a god.”<sup>111</sup> Jane McNally writes about the women, “They live in relation to the husband, to serve the husband. To the orthodox Hindu woman, her husband is her god”.<sup>112</sup> The center of a woman's universe is her husband. She obeys and reveres him as if he were god incarnate. Her mate is not a partner, but a demi-god, without flaw or traits worthy of condemnation. How can he not fail to gain an oversized ego?

### **Programs for Deliverance and Empowerment of Women**

There are many governmental programs to help women, but none that has been universally effective. Ironically, the government programs are aimed at family planning, which a brutal culture has successfully accomplished by eliminating many female

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<sup>108</sup> Ibid.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid.

<sup>112</sup> Jane McNally, *ABUSE of Christian Women in India* (Delhi: ISPCK, 1999), 3.

children. There are also non governmental organizations (NGOs) that reach out to battered and abused women, but that are empowered by the government.

Elsewhere in the nation through Christian Churches, in the name of Jesus Christ, the Christian women enjoy a reasonable amount of deliverance from oppression.

Moadel Mansoor writes:

[A]bout the middle of the nineteenth century ... there began increasing interests among the literate men in educating their daughters and other female relatives. Over a decade later saw the beginning of large scale missionary activities among woman by Christian women.<sup>113</sup>

When the East India Company took over, it brought many changes, mainly through the Christian missionaries. These missionaries achieved much in the deliverance of women from oppression, and empowered them through education and confidence building measures. Magdelene Kembel writes:

In the past, female missionaries built awareness in the life of women. Their education policy was to redeem woman forever from age old suppression. Missionaries built their confidence and facilitated women's standing on their own feet. They also helped their sisters to make progress ... as evangelists, teachers and nurses. ... most protestant churches have taken an active role in empowering women through seminars, conferences, and theological training.<sup>114</sup>

In Kalahandi there is no effective private agency specifically aimed at delivering women from oppression in the areas of dowry demand, female infanticide, feticide, child marriage, education deprivation, enforced husband-worship and slavery. Due to the fierce resistance of the Hindutva or Brahmanicals against Christians and Christian movements, no church has grown successfully in Kalahandi so far. Without successful church outreach, other measures can only be half steps. This is especially true given the notion of rebirth that locks the current practices in place.

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<sup>113</sup> Moadel Mansoor, "Religion and Women," *Journal for the scientific study of Religion* (March, 1998), 6 of 21.

<sup>114</sup> Magdelene Kembel, "Modern Education and Women in India," *International Bulletin of Missionary Journal*, 19/1 (January 2002), 71.

However, education and good jobs can go a long way towards helping women eradicate some of the biases against them. So far, no agency is working in this direction in Kalahandi or Junagarh. Junagarh has even less help.

The Government of India strictly prohibits Sati. Under the Central Government there are laws prohibiting the marriage of women under 18 years, temple prostitution, dowry, infanticide, feticide, etc; and laws encouraging women's education.

Unfortunately, the government of Orissa, through its policies, induces the continued oppression of women. For example, it has a 'two child norm' condition. With this one condition, it achieves female oppression in the following three ways.

- i. It encourages selective infanticide/feticide.
- ii. It forbids women from contesting in elections for public offices if she has more than two children.
- iii. If a woman is in office, this condition humiliates her by forcing her to vacate the position if she has a third child. Men somehow are exempt from this.

Bishakha Bhanja writes:

At present the Government of Orissa has put conditionality on the aspirant Panchayati Raj candidate which is popularly known 'Two child norm' conditionality. As per the norm if the person has more than two children (the cut off date is 1994) then he/she is not eligible for contesting election. And if by chance she/he has been elected then he/she has to vacate the office. Though having a small family is definitely good option, this kind of conditionality puts the women in a vulnerable situation. This prompts many to go for sex selective abortion.<sup>115</sup>

The Self Help groups that were started in the Kalahandi district have not done any thing effective in terms of female empowerment. Although Federal Government programs are in existence on the books, they do not exist in practice. The study populations in Junagarh and Kalahandi live in ignorance and darkness as they always have. Brahmins

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<sup>115</sup> Bishakha Bhanja, "Female feticide in Orissa," National Alliance of Women, Orissa, available from Kalingatimes.com; Internet; accessed 21 August 2007.

and practitioners of Hindutva administer 'justice' here. Mr. M., a local villager says, "Even if 1% of government help reaches here, you would have found it in the people". The government of Orissa is corrupt at all levels and true concern for the people is lacking. The very oppressors control the levers of power. It is not in their interest to change the status quo. So the most helpless of the population, women and girls, remain at the mercy of a harsh society, their only salvation at the foot of the cross.

## **CHAPTER 4 - PROJECT DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION**

### **Implementation**

The research project was implemented in Junagarh as proposed and designed.

The study was conducted in the following order:

- i. Selection of the place as well as the ministry team for prayer and worship.
- ii. Field visitation and invitation
- iii. Assessing the emotional and spiritual needs of the Intervention Group with a questionnaire.
- iv. First four weeks of field work: observation of each woman's daily routines and the social patterns of the group.
- v. Counseling of each individual by a member of the appointed evangelical team on health awareness, spiritual awareness, mental awareness, physical awareness, daily routines and social stresses.
- vi. Engaging the women with spiritual knowledge and education on God's love for them (four months).
- vii. Follow up assessment at the end of the program on Self Empowerment, Self Esteem, sense of Self Worth and Spiritual Awareness and Empowerment by use of questionnaire.
- viii. Additional resources and supplemental support through Bible study, fellowship meetings, Church meetings, prayer cells.

### **Selection of the Place and the Ministry Team for Prayer and Worship**

In order to accommodate local prospective believers for fellowship meetings in the first year, a gathering house, near a government proposed train station site for a future train route, was arranged on June 20, 2007, after consultation with local Christian workers as an ideal, convenient location. This house of prayer was chosen after a careful study of the entire area of Junagarh. The site was named the “fellowship home.” Reasons for choosing this place include: 1) Transportation facilities, and 2) Dense population area that was ideal for outreach.

A ministry team had been chosen earlier, given the urgency of the need for ministry in this part of India. The team consists of a church worker, two male evangelists, one female evangelist and a social worker.

### **Field Visitation and Invitation**

This researcher visited twenty randomly chosen families with the ministry team. The initial visits were completed in 3 days. After the visits the women of the families were invited for a fellowship meeting on the fourth day. The interaction was casual. In most of these homes, the women and families gladly welcomed the team.

On the fourth day a fellowship meeting was conducted in the fellowship home under the researcher's leadership. Only 12 women attended the fellowship meeting. It was an informal meeting. The members of the ministry team and the women attendees had a chance to familiarize with each other more than they had the previous days. Notes were taken to identify their daily routines and social patterns. The team of ministers informed the women that the purpose of the fellowship was to lead them to a closer awareness of their spiritual needs, and thus, empower them in the spiritual and social areas of life. It is hoped that this may eventually lead them to economic empowerment as well. Ten of the women were happy to get a chance to attend the meeting. The

ministry team selected those interested ten women as members of the Intervention Group. The members of the Intervention Group are identified as Participants A to J.

### **Initial Assessment of Emotional and Spiritual Needs Through Questionnaires**

Questionnaires were administered to the members of the Intervention Group. Under emotional needs, 42 questions were asked to evaluate their discontentment, seventeen to assess self esteem and thirteen on self worth. Appendices 1, 2, and 3 contain the questionnaires used to evaluate emotional needs. Appendix 4 contains the questionnaire used to evaluate spiritual needs.

Under discontentment the following six areas were specifically assessed.

- i. Discouragement about growth potential
- ii. Discrimination within the family
- iii. Physical and mental oppression
- iv. Selective sex discrimination and violence shown to females (fetus to childhood deaths by abortion, killing, selling, and child marriage)
- v. Experience of widows
- vi. Individual member's suggestion for improvement

The following are answers to the questions regarding discontentment and their evaluations: When the ten members of the Intervention Group were questioned on discouragement in growth potentials with five questions, eight of them answered that they suffered discouragement, and two did not. All ten had suffered discrimination within the family. They felt men are born blessed and women are cursed (through their culture and religious indoctrination). Two of them wanted to be reborn as Brahmin men, and five of them wanted to be reborn as men. On physical and mental oppression nine women answered that they had suffered oppression of both kinds. Among those nine, one has attempted suicide due to dowry torture. One answered that she never suffered any

oppression from the family. On selective sex discrimination, through selective fetus killing, female infant killing, child selling, child marriage, consecrated temple prostitution, etc. all ten replied that they were against it. All were discontent with the religious and cultural system that propagates this discrimination. Among the Intervention Group, three were married at nine, and only had a vague recollection of their marriages. One was married at ten, three were married at twelve, one married at thirteen and one at fourteen. One member of the study group, a teacher, was not married, and is twenty one now. None of the nine married women remembered the date of her marriage. The seven that were married young (at 9, 10 and 12) were bitter about their marriage experiences.

On the existing system of widow handling and Sati, all of the Intervention Group members answered that the present system is unacceptable. They felt that widows must remarry to survive. However, they noted that widow torture, seclusion and Sati are practiced more among the upper caste.

On hard labor, seven of the group members answered they still suffer from it. Three felt they were never forced to work excessively. Of the seven suffering most, one started at age 5, three from age six and three at different ages from seven to ten. Most of these began in the area of cultivation, such as planting and harvesting rice paddy.

The following were answers to the questions assessing self-esteem and their evaluations: Nine of the Intervention Group women did not have self-respect, and one answered that she did. One questioned, "With menial and hard labor as women, what self respect?" Another questioned, "With no equal status where is self respect?" Eight women desired to educate their daughters and help them become teachers and officers for them to have self esteem. Three questioned, "Where is the place for self-esteem when women are born cursed?"

The following are answers to the questions assessing self-worth and their evaluations: Nine out of ten women expressed having no self-worth, and one expressed



having it. Four felt there was no hope of improving self worth. One expressed hope for improvement. Out of ten one was proud of her achievements and nine were not. Two hoped they would be reborn as Brahmin men and thus improve self worth. Five hoped that they would be reborn as men in the next life and then have self respect and self worth. Three did not express their desire after death. One cried out that she was ashamed of her culture and practices. One said, "Everything is cultural and religious." Another one voiced, "Men must be educated to help women for them to have self respect and self worth." Another one voiced, "There is no equal status and therefore my chance for growth is over."

The following are answers to the questions assessing spiritual needs and their evaluations: Nine of the Intervention Group women answered that they were Hindus and one was a recent believer in Christ. Nine replied that the Hindu priest, known as Pujari, alone worships. The believers' participation in the worship is in giving food, fruits, flowers, coins and hairs to gods and goddesses. Nine reported having no freedom from husband and family to go to church, but one has freedom from her parents. Four had healing experience in Jesus Christ from sicknesses. Four others wanted to know about Christ. One has no faith in Christ. They all wanted to have spiritual freedom. Regarding their desire for attending church, five wanted to attend church. Another five wanted to know more about Christ.

#### Interpretation of Assessment

The initial assessment on emotional needs reveals to us that all nine of the ten Intervention Group women were fully aware that emotionally they are going through a state of hopelessness. They voiced that they are inherently cursed by being born women, and that this idea culturally and religiously was forced upon them. They

expressed their happiness at having this questionnaire. It gave them insight into their own spiritual malnourishment, and voice to their despair.

The initial assessment of self-esteem and self-worth revealed that the women rarely considered the concepts of self-esteem and self-worth applicable to women. It seems to be something reserved for men. This is evident in expressions such as, "I will be reborn next time as a Brahmin man," "I will be reborn as a man in the next re-birth, for self- respect and self worth."

The initial assessment of spiritual awareness reveals that out of nine Hindu women, none have freedom to attend Christian worship. Yet, all were interested to know more about Christ. They desired to know more about the freedom that women have in Christianity, including one who has no faith in Christ. However, five people had some experience with Christianity, and the others wanted to know about the freedom and love that is available for women in Christ. The researcher was encouraged to see their interest in Christ.

### **First Four Weeks of Field Work Observing the Intervention Group's Daily Routines and Social Patterns**

The four week observation of daily routines and social patterns of the Intervention Group was done by the researcher and members of the evangelical team. All team members were fully trained by the researcher. Each member observed two women, and studied their routine and social patterns. A profile was made of every woman in the Intervention Group. Sunday service was conducted regularly. The women were invited. Most members were present at every meeting. Sunday's average attendance was 60%. The following short descriptive profiles of the ten women in the Intervention Group describe each person's data. These four weeks of field work came to an end by July 17, 2007.

*Table 1: Short Profiles of the Intervention Group*

Sl. No.	Part-icipant	Age	Age at marriage	Husband's age at marriage	Edu-cation	Income for living	Marital Status	Religion & God	Willing to attend Prayer
1	A	33	12	21	3 <sup>rd</sup> Grade	Nursery Att. Rs.300, Curd Sale, Fishing	M	Hindu	✓
2	B	45	12	27	5 <sup>th</sup> Grade	Nursery Att. Rs.300, Agent – Leprosy Hospital	M	Hindu	✓
3	C	40	13	26	Nil	House Construction Helper, Collecting wood and leaves from forest to sell	Divorced due to mental problem of the Husband	Hindu	50%
4	D	43	9	25	Nil	Rs.4000/- Husband's pension	Widow 3 Years	Hindu	✓
5	E	21	10	19	Nil	Agriculture	M	Hindu	✓
6	F	24	14	19	4 <sup>th</sup> Grade	Husband's Fishing & Daily labor	M	Hindu	✓
7	G	45	12	27	Nil	Daily hard labor & Fishing of Husband	M	Hindu	✓
8	H	50	9	28	Nil	Attendant	M	Hindu	✓
9	I	45	9	27	Nil	Husband's Fishing & Manual Work	M	Hindu	✓
10	J	22	N.A	N.A	+2	Rs.1500/- Teaching	Not Married	Christian	✓

### Descriptive individual profiles of the Intervention Group

Participant A is a 33 year old married woman with 5 children from Gantayat Para of Junagarh town, called NAC<sup>1</sup> in Kalahandi District. Her husband is a 42 year old fisherman. The first of their four daughters is 12 year old, and is at home. The second girl, 10 years old, is studying in 4th grade. She appears very smart and is studying well. She wants to be a teacher. Their 3rd girl, 8 years old, is studying in 1st grade. Their only son, 4years, has not started going to school.

Their house is a hut with a kitchen, and a multi purpose room where they sleep. It has a verandah with a parapet wall which is counted as a room, and a courtyard of 30' x 15'. The rooms and front floors are completed with mud, and smeared with cow dung. In the kitchen there is a fire-wood oven, a kerosene stove and a countertop. Kerosene is very expensive, so that they can not afford a kerosene stove. They don't have electricity in the house. They use kerosene lamps for lights in the house. There are some aluminum pots for cooking. They cook rice, dhal curry and different vegetables<sup>2</sup>. They also make indigenous bread which is called rotti. Their bedroom has 2 beds and a few built-in cabinets where they keep their cloths and other important belongings. There is a long thread tied from wall to wall in the room where all their cloths are hung. The verandah has one coir<sup>3</sup> bed and 2 chairs. The rooms and the kitchen are kept clean. But the outside is muddy and unclean, as it is the rainy season. A public road passes through the front of their house. This road is filled with mud, cow dung and human waste. There are flies and mosquitoes. These flies and mosquitoes are inside the house too, but they do not worry about them due to ignorance.

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<sup>1</sup> NAC – Notified Area of Council. By local public administration rank, this represents an area that stands between a Village Panchayat and a Municipality.

<sup>2</sup> Subjee – Vegetable side dishes.

<sup>3</sup> Coir – A long canvas belt used to make tension mat between the frames of local cots.

Participant A gets up at 5:30 am and worships the mythical gods Ram, Laxman, and Sita until 6am. She has shown some interest in listening to the gospel. After 6am she washes herself and washes the inside and outside of her house. Then she prepares the morning food, usually the previous day's old rice with some subjee. She wakes her children up at 6:30am and sends them to brush and bath. They use Duath Katti<sup>4</sup> for brushing their teeth. At 7:30am she sends 3 children to school. She works as an attendant in the Balawadi (Anganwadi)<sup>5</sup> of a government school from 7:30am-9:30am. She makes Rs.300/ month (US\$7.50). At 10am she returns home and cooks lunch for the family with rice and vegetables with dhal or potato mixed curry. She also makes curd from milk and sells it to her neighbors to make part of her income. The school functions in this NAC area from 7:30am till 1:30pm. Participant A washes her family's clothes in a nearest pool daily between 12.30pm and 1.30pm before the children return after she has finished cooking. The children return home from school for a late lunch. The Government school provides a few biscuits and drinks at noon. The children bring snacks with them too. From 2-4pm Participant A rests with her children. At 4pm she gets up and starts her kitchen work and cleaning. She usually completes her evening cooking at 6.30pm. Their dinner time is at 9pm. The children study from 6-9pm. They go to bed between 9pm and 10pm daily.

Participant A and her husband were married when she was 12 and her husband was 21. She doesn't remember the year of their marriage. She only studied up to 3rd grade. Her husband is a fisherman who goes fishing at 5 am daily. In their locality there are three big ponds and a few rivers. Her husband, and the local men, go together in small boats and catch fish to take to the public markets. Thus, they have a meager

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<sup>4</sup> Dauth Katti – A small branch of a type of tree like Neem used for tooth brush and paste.

<sup>5</sup> Balawadi (Anganwadi) – A Nursery school system for children below 5 years old.

income from fish selling, curd selling and from her government work. She is a thin, good looking woman. They belong to scheduled caste.<sup>6</sup>

Participant B, 45 years old, is from the Gotipora area of Junagarh town, the NAC. She is an Aaya<sup>7</sup> at an Anganwadi<sup>8</sup> for the government of Orissa under the ICDS<sup>9</sup>. She is also a hospital agent for finding and assisting leprosy patients from the surrounding Junagarh area to the Junagarh Leprosy Center. She draws Rs.300/ month. She works from 7:30am – 9:30am at the Anganwadi, and in her spare time for government agency. Her husband is 60 and works for a construction company. They have five children, 3 boys and 2 girls. Her 2nd son is 25 years old. Her 3rd boy is 20 years old and the 4th one is 18 years old. Her sons did not study beyond 8th and 10th grades. They are unmarried, living with their parents and working with their father in construction. Her older daughter was married at the age of 13, and gave birth to 3 children but died of some illness at the age of 27. Her 5th child, aged 17, is married, and has 2 children. Participant B was married at the age of 12 when her husband was 27. She studied only up to 5th Grade. Participant B was more vocal than other women in the group. She looks more modern with her dress and communication style.

As part of her daily routine, she gets up early at 5:30am and worships her gods Rama- Sita<sup>10</sup> and Laxmi<sup>11</sup>, till 6am in her temple. Then she cleans and washes her kitchen and vessels. Thereafter, she prepares breakfast for her family with rotti<sup>12</sup> (bread) and subjee or old rice from the previous day with some curry. By 6.30am she leaves home to go to work. She sometimes goes around the various houses to find small children between the ages of 2 and 5, and brings them to the Anganwadi as part of her

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<sup>6</sup> Scheduled Caste – The lowest of the Brahminical Varna (caste ) divisions.

<sup>7</sup> Aaya – An attendant.

<sup>8</sup> Anganwadi – Nursery School for children aged 2 – 5.

<sup>9</sup> ICDS – Indian Children Development Scheme.

<sup>10</sup> Rama-Sita – husband and wife of Hindu epic and purana (god and goddesses) .

<sup>11</sup> Laxmi – is the god of blessing.

<sup>12</sup> Rotti – Indian Bread.

job. After 9:30am, she comes home and cooks lunch for her family with rice and subjees. Orissa's people commonly eat rice. Their main meal is cooked rice, eaten with side dishes, three times daily. After lunch, she goes to the local pool and washes her cloths and takes a bath. From 2 - 4pm she takes rest, except when there is some important matter. Sometimes she gets a call from the office, and she is bound to go and take care of the need. From 4 - 6 pm she cooks dinner with rice or rotti. They not only eat rice but other grains like maidha, wheat, barley, and cholam<sup>13</sup> as well. Their dinner time is between 8 and 9pm and she goes to bed straight away.

Participant B has her own family house. Outside, the house gives the appearance of a hut, but it has 3 large rooms inside in addition to kitchen and verandah<sup>14</sup>. Every room has a bed and is clean. They do not have shelves or bureaus to keep their cloths and belongings. There are ropes for hanging cloths. There are three huge clay pots for storage of paddy and other grains. There is a hole at one spot in the floor of the kitchen which is cemented, where they hand-mill the paddy and separate the rice using special wooden poles. They also have a grinding stone to grind wheat, rice, and other grains. Other than these, they have a separate spice grinding stone in the kitchen for cooking spices. None in this area has a grinding machine. She does not have electricity in her house. They use kerosene lamps for light and firewood for cooking. She has 2 goats and few chickens in her house. She tries to educate the women in her village. She expressed that women like this researcher are blessed by God, and that her people were cursed in the previous birth. It was an opportunity for the researcher to open the truth of the Gospel and its promised blessings to those who follow the living God.

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<sup>13</sup> Cholam – Corn.

<sup>14</sup> Verandah – An open area at the entrance of the house.

Participant C, a 40 years old woman, is from Agachpora area of Junagarh in Kalahandi District. She was married when she was 13 years old and lived with her husband for 8 years. She separated from her husband 18 years ago, claiming that he was a mental patient. He acts out violently, and she could not live with him. She has one son who is 18 years old. He studied up to 9th grade, and now does nothing. Participant C appears very thin and emaciated.

She gets up at 5am, and attends the nearest temple to worship with flowers. Then she returns home to get ready for her daily work. She prepares the breakfast for her mother and son. Then, she takes her food and goes walking to forest. In the morning, she goes to collect things from the forest such as wood, green leaves, bamboo shoots etc., and brings them to the market to make a living. She says that she walks between twenty and twenty five kilometers every day. She says she did something bad in her past birth, that's why she suffers now. She wanted a change if possible. She does not have her own house. She shares it with her mother who is not able to work. The house is falling apart. She did not go to school and study. She started her life with hard manual work such as construction work and collecting firewood from the forest.

Her father died when she was young, and mother was left with 7 children. Participant C was the 5th among them. Her 3 brothers and one sister are married, and are living in distant areas. Two of her siblings died. Her family has a distressed history. She attends the prayer group at times but goes to the Soumya Devi temple at times and participates in all its functions. The house where she lives has one room and a small kitchen. The walls of the house are very unstable. The neighbors are helping her to complete the roof. There is no electricity in the house. Her mother is unable to do anything. Her son spends his time with young gangs playing cards, attending cinemas and involved in drugs and alcohol dealings. This researcher invited her to the women's fellowship regularly, and to the church for worship and blessing. She does not have a



toilet or bathroom in her house. She goes to the open areas for toileting, and uses the public pool for bathing and washing. This researcher contacted the Public Health Department and requested government actions regarding the existing health hazards through the social workers in the area.

Participant D, aged 43, is a woman with no education. She was married to a 25 year old man when she was just 9. Her husband, was Head Master<sup>15</sup> of an LPS<sup>16</sup>. He passed away 3 years ago, leaving her with 3 children, 2 boys and a girl. The first son, aged 32, is married with 2 children and living in the parents' house. He attended school only up to 9th grade. He is an idle man who does not go to work. His family eats from his mother's pension. Her second son is 18 years old and has completed 12th grade. He does not have a job and so is staying home with his mother. Her only daughter, 8, has a mental disorder. Participant D receives Rs. 4000/- per month as pension from her deceased husband's job. She does not wear a blouse but wraps a long cloth around her body. Participant D has her own house in the Mudavandpora area of Junagarh with 3 rooms and a verandah. There is no electricity in the house, and she uses kerosene lamps. Her kitchen is bigger than her 2 other rooms. Her first son and family are living in one room. Another room is used by herself and her daughter. Her second son sleeps in their verandah. They have cots. The house is made with mud and painted with cow dung. The kitchen has a fire-wood oven, and a grinding stone for rice grinding. They cultivate paddy twice in a year. She has a manual rice mill in her house. There is no furniture other than a canvas chair and cots. She has large storage jars inside her house. She has goats, lambs and chicken for live-stocks.

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<sup>15</sup> Head Master – Principal.

<sup>16</sup> LPS – Lower Primary School (Grade School).

Participant D gets up in the early morning and worships her goddess Soumya Devi first thing. She does not know to read or write. They have no clock, and so, she says she never knows the exact time. She gets up when the rooster crows. She offers flowers, fruits, food and balms before the idol on the deity-stand in her room every morning. When she makes food the first portion she keeps for her goddess and does puja or ceremonial prayer to her. She also goes to her temple to worship Rama and Sita. She is pleasant in her appearance. She was interested to hear the Gospel. I invited her to come to the fellowship group which is near her house. She was interested to learn more about the development and self-improvement of the women. She was told that she was encouraged to attend the adult evening education class and attain knowledge. Also, she was invited to attend the women's fellowship meeting to understand more about the living God. She was also encouraged to put her son to work, and not feed him if he will not work. She does not have a toilet or bathrooms in her house. They use open space for toileting, bathing and washing. For bathing and washing they use public pools. They squat outside in public places for toileting. The researcher has taught the family to make a hole outside for toileting, and cover it with soil for the time being. She requested the town administration and public health department to arrange toilet facilities for the people. The local social worker was requested to take action to change this unhealthy environment. In comparison with the other women, Participant D is well off with her income.

Participant E, age 21, is the mother of 4 children, 3 boys and a girl. Her husband, aged 30, married her when she was 10 years old. Her oldest son, aged 9 years, is studying in 3rd grade in a government school. Her second son is 7 years old and studying in the 2nd grade. The third son is 5 years old and is in Anganwadi

Kendra<sup>17</sup>. Her daughter is a year old baby. They live in Godipora area of Junagarh. Her husband works in construction, occasionally. Participant E is a house wife and has never attended a school. She does not even know how to write her own language, Oriya. She can only speak Oriya. She belongs to a Scheduled Tribe. Participant E is living with her husband's family where there are 5 members other than his father and mother. Her husband has 3 brothers and 2 sisters. His sisters are married and living with their husbands. Her husband's brothers are married, and are living together with their extended family. Her husband's youngest brother is studying in 10th grade. Their house has 3 rooms and a kitchen with no electricity. She shares one of those rooms. They have paddy fields where the whole family works during planting and harvesting seasons. They have large storage jars to store the grains. In the kitchen, they have a grinding pit. Their house floor is cemented but walls are mud and painted with cow dung. They have canvas<sup>18</sup> cots in each room. They also have three plastic and one wooden chair. They all eat and share things together with their father and mother. They worship Laxmi and Soumya Devi. They have a puja stand where they offer food, fruits, flowers, etc., to their goddess. Every time they cook, they offer the first portion to their goddess. They have their own temple where they offer sacrifices. Participant E gave her hair after each delivery as a sacrifice for her safe delivery to Soumya Devi, her goddess.

Participant E's daily routine begins at 5am with a prolonged worship of her goddess. Then she starts with her daily kitchen work. Her mother-in-law and other women help her with kitchen chores as they have a big family. After breakfast, she gets her children ready for school and sends them to school. They eat 3 meals daily consisting of rice every day with dhal, potato curry and different vegetables.

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<sup>17</sup> Anganwadi Kendra – Nursery School.

<sup>18</sup> Canvas – is a linen material to spin the cot.

Occasionally they make rotti. They make their sweet treats with too much sugar. Women are not allowed to go out of their houses except to draw water. The elderly among them go to market to purchase food items and to sell their homemade items. They eat lunch around 1:30pm. Tea time is at 4.30pm. Tea is served in 2 ounce portions and is strong. Other than working days and paddy seasons, rest time is from 2-4pm. Dinner is prepared between 4-6pm and eaten at 9pm. Bedtime is between 10 and 11pm. They lead a very idle life other than in paddy seasons and cooking time. Participant E was invited for adult education. The other ladies were invited for women's fellowship. These women do not know of a world that exists outside of their daily routines. Though mentally, physically and spiritually oppressed, they are not able to identify the difference between free and subjugated life, since this social order is traditionally passed down over many centuries.

Participant F, 24 years old, has 3 children with her husband. Participant F was 14 and her husband was 19 when they got married. Her husband is a fisherman and goes fishing daily. He is a hard working man and very concerned about his wife and children. Their first son is 7 years old and is in 2nd grade. The second son is 5 years old and studies in Anganwadi. Their youngest is a 2 year old baby girl and is still being nursed. Participant F is a housewife, and will take any work she can get outside their house. She has a 4th grade education. Her husband fishes from nearby pools and rivers and his catch in the market daily in order to purchase their supplies. He returns home by 4pm. After a bath and snacks, he takes a nap.

Participant F's routine begins early in the morning with prayer and worship to their goddess Durga, after which she starts morning chores. Breakfast is usually leftover rice and vegetables. She has breakfast with her husband and children ready by 7.30am. Then she draws water at the public manual pump. After a bath she washes dishes and prepares lunch. Her children come home from school before 2pm. The second son

returns from Anganwadi at 12 noon and the first son at 2pm. After feeding them lunch, she puts them down for a nap and sets out lunch for her husband.

They own their own house which has 2 rooms and a kitchen. The researcher noticed only one rope braided cot inside the 2nd room. There is a chair and a stool in the 1st room. There is a long rope in the middle of the 2nd room used to hang laundry. Two large baked clay jars are in the inner room for storage of grains. The school books are kept in the corner of the 1st room. They do not have electricity. The children sit on the floor and study under a kerosene lamp. Kerosene is very expensive and often unavailable. They study and work by candlelight. Her kitchen contains a firewood oven, a grinding stone, and a few aluminum and silver vessels. They do not have a toilet or bathroom indoors; but use open ground outside as a toilet.

Participant F is a very devout Hindu and worships Rama-Sita, Laxmi, Durga and Soumya Devi. She goes to the Soumya Devi temple and offers sacrifices once a week. She attends the Rama-Sita temple every day. She offers food, fruits, and flowers to the goddesses every day. The first portion of everything she cooks is offered to her goddesses. The family eats only after.

Participant G is a slim, fair, 45 year old woman. She got married when she was 12 years old to her husband, a 27 year old fisherman. They have 4 children, 2 girls and 2 boys. The girls are aged 18 and 16, and the boys are 14 and 9 years old. Only the youngest child attends school. The older three children work at a construction site. The second daughter often works at other houses drawing water from the pump, washing cloths, and doing other household chores. Participant G takes dry fish either from the house or bought whole sale to the market to sell for profit. Her husband is weak, and often is unable to go for fishing. When he goes, they either sell his catch on the same day or they dry it and sell it later.

The family home is a small hut in Godipora section of Junagarh, with 2 rooms and a kitchen. In the kitchen, she uses firewood to cook. She has a grinding stone and some utensils. In the rooms they have the rope-braided beds, but no other furniture.

They have a long rope across the rooms to hang their clothes. Also, in the rooms they have one jar to save their dry fish, and two jars for grains. The house smells strongly of dry fish. They have a Rama temple nearby where they worship Rama-Sita and Laxmi. They also go to the Soumya Devi temple every Sunday. They give a good amount of money to these temples and to other gods and goddesses. Neither Participant G nor her husband attended school. They speak the local language of Oriya and belong to the Scheduled Caste.

Participant G's daily routine is to get up early in the morning and go to temple for prayer. When she comes back, she washes her kitchen utensils and begins preparing morning breakfast. Breakfast is usually leftover rice and vegetables. After breakfast she leaves to sell fish or for another manual job at 7:30am. Her children also work most days. Her youngest boy goes to school by himself. Participant G usually returns by 2 pm. Once Participant G returns home, she starts cooking lunch and dinner. Then she takes laundry to the local pool for washing. She washes her laundry, takes a bath and returns home around 5pm. Then she relaxes until everyone comes home. They eat dinner around 8pm and go to bed at 10pm. From 8-10pm they chat with neighbors. Most of their neighbors are extended family: her husband's sisters and brothers and their families. None of these families have their own toilets or electricity in their homes. They all use open fields for toilets. They are a people with no knowledge of health and hygiene. This researcher has expressed this health concern to the public health department and the local government.

Participant H, aged 50, is a school Aaya. She also tends to the school's fruit and vegetable garden, and is responsible for selling the harvest in the public market. Her

husband is 68 years old. Although she does not clearly remember her age at marriage, she remembers that after her marriage she was sent back to her parent's home for a few years until she matured. Participant H speaks Oriya and has a good sense of humor.

Participant H never attended a school but is a smart woman. She is well respected by people around her. She has 2 sons and a daughter, all married. One son and his family live with her. None of Participant H's children attended school. The family lives on the income Participant H earns. Her husband occasionally works odd jobs but spends his income on alcohol. Her son is also an alcoholic and does not work regularly. The family home has two rooms and a kitchen. Her daughter-in-law cooks for the family.

Participant H begins her day early by going to the Rama temple to pray. When she returns home, she gets ready to go to school, taking breakfast with her. Her work hours are 7:30am-1pm. There are vegetables and fruits growing in the school garden. After school hours she sells the produce at the market and accounts the sale proceeds to the school clerk. She returns home after 2pm for lunch. Then she washes laundry and takes a bath. When she returns home, she takes a nap. On non-school days she works at odd jobs. She is the sole breadwinner of the house. Her daughter-in-law is a housewife. Her son eats with her and spends what little he earns on alcohol and gambling. At 9pm they have dinner and go to bed.

Participant H's house has only 2 braided beds with canvas in 2 rooms, a few clay jars to store their grains, and a long rope around the rooms for hanging their laundry. In the kitchen she has a firewood oven, a few vessels and a grinding stone. She spends her free time with her grandchildren and the neighbors' children. She has 3 grandchildren, 2 girls and a boy, who attend 3rd and 1st grades. She entertains all the children of the neighboring houses and also takes them to school. She feels badly that she did not have the opportunity to educate herself or her children. As such, she is

motivated to encourage others to become educated. The home does not have a bathroom. She uses an open public area for toileting needs.

Participant I is a slim, fair colored, 45 year old woman. She was married when she was 9 year old to her husband, a fisherman, who was 27 years old. They have 4 children, 2 girls and 2 boys. Only the youngest boy, 9 years old, attends school. None of her other children are attending the school. The two older children work in the construction site. The oldest girl often goes to other houses to do all kinds of house works such as bringing water from the pump, washing cloths, etc. Participant I takes dry fish either from the house or bought from whole sale to the market and sells for profit. Her husband is weak, and often not able to go for fishing. When he goes, they either sell that fish on the same day or dry and sell later.

She has a small hut in Godipora section of Junagarh, and a kitchen. In the kitchen, she uses fire-wood for cooking. She has a grinding stone with some utensils. In the rooms they have the rope-braided beds, but no other furniture. They have long rope across the rooms to hang their cloths. Also in the room they have one clay jar to save their dry fishes, and two for grains. The house smells hard with dry fishes. They have Rama-temple nearby where they worship Rama-Sita and Laxmi. They also go to Soumya Devi temple every Sunday. They spend a good amount of money to temples and to their god and goddesses. She and her husband never attended a school. They speak local Oriya and belong to scheduled Caste.

As a routine, she gets up in the early morning and goes to temple for prayer. When she comes back, she washes her kitchen utensils and starts to prepare morning breakfast. Usually they eat old rice from previous day with some vegetables<sup>19</sup>. After breakfast, she leaves to sell fishes or find job(manual) at 7:30 am. Her children also go to work most of the days. Her youngest boy goes to school by himself. Participant I

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<sup>19</sup> Subjee – A vegetarian side dish for rice or rotti (wheat bread).



usually return by 2 pm. For their lunch, they carry a little old rice to work places. Once Participant I returns home, she starts cooking for lunch and children. She washes her cloths in a pool, takes bath and returns around 5 pm. Then she relaxes until everyone comes home. They eat their dinner around 8 pm and go to bed at 10 pm. From 8 – 10 pm, they chat with neighbors. Most of their neighbors are their relatives. Her husband's sisters and brothers with their families live around them. None of these families have their own toilets or bathrooms. They all use open field for toileting. They are a people with no knowledge on health and hygiene. This researcher has approached the public health department and the local government about this concern.

Participant J is a 22 year old unmarried woman who teaches at a nursery and earns Rs.1500 per month. For education, she finished 12th grade. She has 2 younger sisters and one brother. Her father, 56 years old, has a petty shop selling belts, animal skin shoes, and other small items. Her mother is 48 years old and is a housewife. Her parents were married young. Her mother was 14 when she was married. Her younger sisters and brother attend school. She lives with her parents in a home which has 3 rooms, a kitchen, and a bathroom. She gets up at 6am. Her parents just started attending church, but are still unsure that they are doing the right thing. Participant J believes Christian life is better than following Hindu traditions.

Participant J's daily routine begins with work at the school from 7:30am-2pm. After school she tutors students to make extra money. Her usual diet is rice with vegetables for lunch and dinner. Breakfast is usually with uppuma<sup>20</sup> or rice from the previous day. She prepares her school lessons for the next day before going to bed. Her mother cooks for the family and her father is the breadwinner. He encourages the children to study and get jobs. Participant J was given a Bible study by this researcher which helped clear some of her questions. She is willing to attend church service at the

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<sup>20</sup> Uppuma is made from Rava (grinded grain).

SWM (Soul Winning Mission) church. She is also advised to attend Sunday school and women's fellowship regularly.

### **Report of Four Weeks Individual Counseling to the Intervention Group by the Ministry Team**

Counseling was given individually for four weeks to the women of the Intervention Group by members of the ministry team. Each ministry team member was given two women from the Intervention Group for counseling. Each counselor met with the counselee three times a week. They carefully studied the individual needs of the Intervention Group and offered need-based counseling. This was done for four weeks and the following items were submitted.

Participant A: Poor conditions prevailed on toileting, water supply, and cleanliness. Instruction was provided regarding cleanliness when cooking, including fly and mosquito control. She was instructed to keep the surroundings always clean, and how to prevent water stagnation and pollution. Cleanliness around their home was taught. A storage place for dry fish away from their bed room was advised and help was arranged. For toilet and water, the public health and local government were contacted. Education about the Living God was provided. Instruction was provided on how to pray. The power of Jesus' care for us in times of trouble and God's love was taught. These teachings were received well. Participant A was also taught how to prepare and enjoy flavorful, healthy, and inexpensive food. The importance of physical exercises was taught. Daily walking for 2 miles was encouraged. The importance of adult and child education was taught. Reception to this counseling was favorable.

Participant B: Poor conditions prevailed on toileting and cleanliness. Instruction was given on fly and mosquito control. Environmental protection from dirty water stagnation and pollution was taught. Education on leprosy was given. It was advised to

keep goats and chicken in a secure area in the back of the house to prevent unhealthy conditions. A small prayer group was formed. The love of God and power of Jesus was taught. She received the counseling happily and promised to try to incorporate prayer into her daily routine. The importance of education was emphasized. Recommendations to attend evening adult education class to learn how to read and write in their own language was given. Instructions were given on preparing healthy food. Counsel was provided regarding physical exercise such as walking daily once in the morning for two kilometers.

Participant C: She is a single woman living with her mother and a son. She is very poor and toileting, water, and diet habits are dangerously unclean. Public health and local government were approached and promises of assistance were received. Until then, the evangelical team is providing assistance. She was counseled and instructed on how to keep the environment safe, not allowing for stagnation of bad water and pollution, in order to protect the environment from flies and mosquitoes. Healthcare counseling was given by the team including preparing healthy inexpensive food. She was instructed to attend evening class for adult education to learn how to read and write. Teachings were given on the Living God, the power of Jesus and the love of God. Instructions to try to incorporate prayer into her daily routine were given.

Participant D: Poor conditions prevailed on toileting, water supply and cleanliness. An application for government help was submitted to the public health department and local government. Instruction was provided on how to guard the home environment from flies and mosquitoes which bring diseases. Help offered to fill the stagnated water areas with gravel. Healthy food intake and its importance were taught and assisted in purchasing. Also, instructed the importance of cleanliness with food preparation to prevent water born and contagious diseases. Instructed to keep the goat and chicken areas clean to prevent flies. Participant D was taught prayer and its need.

The team counseled her on worshiping the Living God. She was taught the Love of God and His care. The team instructed her to attend Sunday morning church services. The team counseled her to train the married son who lives with her to work for his family's needs. Assistance was offered to help him. She was instructed to attend adult education. She received counseling about exercise to reduce her weight.

Participant E: Participant E does not have a bathroom or access to water at her home. She goes to the public pump to obtain water. Using open space for toileting was discouraged. These needs were presented to the public health department and to the local government as they are very important for her and her family. She was instructed on keeping environment clean to prevent flies and mosquito. Teaching was given about the importance of eating healthy food. Instruction was given on purchasing healthy food with the available financial resources. The ministry team taught her the need for prayer and how to pray. The team encouraged her to learn more about the Living God and His Care and protection. The team shared the power of Jesus with Participant E. Participant E was also taught the importance of physical exercise to stay healthy. She was encouraged to attend the adult education evening classes to learn how to read and write.

Participant F: Instruction was given on how to improve the toilet area and concerned health department officials were contacted to render available assistance. Education on keeping surroundings clean was given. Counseling on proper hygiene and a well balanced diet was provided. Prayer was taught. Counseling was given on the need to incorporate prayer to the Living God daily. The ministry team encouraged her to attend the fellowship meeting and to learn more about Jesus Christ. She was also encouraged to attend evening adult education classes to improve her self esteem. She was instructed on the importance of physical exercise to stay healthy.

Participant G: Participant G was instructed on changing the dry fish storage area in the house. Assistance was rendered in building a hygienic storage area. Her house smelled bad and was infested with flies due to the fish. She was taught how to keep her environment clean. The team assisted her with removing all stagnated water around her house and filled the area with gravel to prevent flies and mosquitoes. She was taught the importance of health and hygiene and instructions were given on how to prepare healthy food. She was taught to pray to the Living God and was counseled on the importance of daily prayer. She was encouraged to attend the fellowship meetings. The entire family was encouraged to attend the adult education class to improve self esteem. Participant G was also taught the importance of physical exercise and a healthy diet.

Participant H: Participant H was given education on toileting habits, cleanliness of the home and surroundings, and the importance of preparing and eating healthy food. Teachings were given on how to do this given the family's financial resources. Applications were submitted to concerned authorities on environmental protections. Suggestions were offered on the availability of medical care for the alcoholic husband and son. Instructions were provided on how to pray and the importance of daily prayer. The ministry team taught her about the unfailing love of the Almighty God. She was encouraged to attend the fellowship meeting. Participant G was also encouraged to attend the adult education classes to improve her self-esteem and self-awareness. She was taught the importance of daily physical exercise.

Participant I: Counseling was given on the need for maintaining a healthy and hygienic environment for her family's health. Education was provided on the health hazards of fly and mosquito infestation. Counseling was given on preventing illness such as malaria, typhoid, and amoebic dysentery. Environmental protection departments were contacted concerning available assistance for providing toilet and water facilities. Participant I was counseled on the need for prayer, and she was encouraged to attend

church fellowship meetings. She was taught about the unfailing Love of God and His care and protection. The team counseled her on health and exercise and eating healthy food. She was counseled on the importance of educating her children and attending the evening adult education class to improve her self awareness.

Participant J: Not much health care teaching was required because Participant J keeps her house and surroundings clean and dry. The family is aware of environmental protection issues and the need for maintaining sanitary surroundings. She was instructed on how to prepare healthy food. The ministry team encouraged her to regularly attend church fellowship meetings, Sunday school, and Sunday worship services. She was encouraged to remain supportive to the rest of the Intervention Group. She was encouraged to remain strong in Christ Jesus. Participant J was encouraged to enroll for higher studies through available extension education. The ministry team taught her the importance of regular exercise and a healthy diet in maintaining a healthy body.

No women in the Intervention Group were in a position to have their daily routines changed. Any change in routine would lead to financial stresses and disruption of existing comfort. Social stresses also cannot be changed suddenly because of the importance of individual and family bonds to society. This counseling session for four weeks ended on August 14, 2007.

### **Beginning to Engage Women Spiritually and Educating Them on God's Love for Four Months**

A regular fellowship meeting was taking place every Sunday from June 20, 2007, with various church activities, and there was an average attendance of 60%. However, it was on August 15, 2007 that the four months of active ministry with teaching on the Love of God began. This ministry was started with one week of revival meetings with invited

ministers. During these days, worship meetings with preaching of the Word of God took place twice daily, mornings and late evenings. For these meetings the Intervention Group women were asked to and invited neighbors and friends. Sermons on the Love of God were delivered. Bible classes were conducted in the early afternoon daily. Question and Answer sessions were allotted. A number of attendees came forward with their questions. Prayer times for the needy were set apart after the meetings. The Power of God worked in the meetings to provide healing for various illnesses. Many believed in Christ. Many were delivered from demonic possessions. Overall response to these meetings was positive.

After the revival meetings, two days of late evening meetings were set up during the weekdays in addition to Sunday worship in the fellowship hall. Prayer groups were arranged two days a week before the Sunday worship in two different places. Adult Sunday school classes were conducted from 9 to 10am and Children's Sunday school from 2 – 3pm on Sundays. The Love of God was the main theme of these meetings. A prayer time was set apart to intercede for those individuals with various needs. The evangelical team provided individual attention and care to everyone who attended the special prayer meetings. Regular house visits took place and people with various needs were prayed for. Adult Education classes were of great help in increasing understanding among attendees. Attendees enjoyed the fellowship in these classes. Those who were illiterate learned to read and write. They started asking thought-provoking questions related to Scripture. A women's fellowship was set up on Saturdays. They enjoyed coming to the meetings dressed well. They showed interest in actively exchanging ideas on reasons why the Lord Jesus Christ was born as a man and on His love.

A Sermon Series on the Love of the Living God was delivered on Sundays during the first three months. Members were interested in attending to the important needs of others as they were taught during the fellowship sessions. The sick as well as persons

with other needs were given additional prayer and physical attendance. A few men also began attending the church services and prayer meetings.

The Intervention Group women were much more relaxed at the end of this training. They witnessed many miracles, including healing and deliverance from demon possessions. They learned and understood the love of God. They experienced a God without prejudice and discrimination for women. They began to love Him because they understood that for the true God, women and men are equal. They understood that women do not have to be reborn as Brahmin males to go to heaven. They individually saw in Jesus a God who loves women. They saw in Him a God who loves sinners. They saw in Him a God on whom they can lean for their care. They showed great interest in attending every prayer meeting. Each woman felt proud of herself. The average attendance for Sunday worship during the last four weeks grew to 20. The 4 month program ended on December 7, 2007. An assessment was performed on this day with follow up questionnaires. No further resources were needed, because of the good response to the original arrangement.

### **Follow up Assessment at the End of the Program**

A follow-up assessment was conducted at the end of the program to evaluate post intervention self empowerment, self esteem, sense of self worth and spiritual awareness and empowerment in the Intervention Group. Appendix 5 contains the questionnaire used for the follow-up assessment. Questions were modified based on the changes of attitude and cooperation that were implicitly and explicitly noticed in the Intervention Group women.

The following are consolidated answers to the questions assessing self-empowerment and their evaluations. All of the women were content and relaxed with their lives. They voiced a great change in their life. The Intervention Group women



expressed happiness that the Lord provided for them to learn about Him. They were happy that they are delivered from their emotional depression and stresses. They are confident that they can manage and overcome existing familial and social discriminations. They expressed joy in gaining knowledge on healthy, sanitary living. They look forward to enjoying a hopeful and victorious life.

The following are answers to the questions assessing post-intervention self-esteem and their evaluations. All of the Intervention Group women respect their lives. They were happy to be educated about the importance of having self-esteem.

The following are answers to the questions assessing post-intervention self-worth and their evaluations. All the women voiced that they are worthy of living in this world also worthy of being called children of God, through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

The following are answers to the questions assessing post-intervention spiritual awareness and empowerment and their evaluations: They are all happy that they know their Creator. They are happy that their Creator does not have any sex discrimination. They are grateful that their Savior is alive to help them. They are all determined to live for Him and share the message of the Good News of Salvation to others despite resistance.

Supplemental support to build up self esteem and self worth was given through Bible study, fellowship meetings, church meetings, prayer cells, Sunday School, women's fellowship and adult education classes. All these together yielded a good result and strengthened the Intervention Group's self-esteem and self-worth.

## **CHAPTER 5 - OUTCOMES**

Ministering to the people in the Kalahandi District offered a fascinating opportunity for ministerial research. Junagarh, the city chosen for this study, is representative of India's cultural values for centuries. This city has been the epicenter of Kalahandi, and is a main focal point for the researcher's Northern Ministry in India. The mission offered a unique opportunity to study the factors affecting ministry in India. None seemed as tragic to this researcher as the plight of women. While giving lip service to the station of wife, sister and mother, the culture does in fact oppress women. The study is conceived and executed as noted in the following five chapters.

- i. The Problems and Settings
- ii. Theological Framework
- iii. Literature Review
- iv. Project Design And Implementation
- v. Outcomes

The problems and the settings of the study area were analyzed using historical factors that have contributed to the present condition. This provided the contents, the assumptions, and the project design and its parameters. The problem areas examined were the Dowry Demand System, Enforced Women Illiteracy, Female Infanticide, Female Feticide, Female Child Selling, the Enforced Hard Labor of Women, Female Child Marriage, Solitary Widowhood and Persecution, Enforced Husband Worship, and Consecrated Temple Prostitution. These practices were traced back to their roots after studying historical texts and the analysis of prominent historians of the Indian culture. Great national figures such as Mahatma Gandhi and Pandita Ramabai have addressed these abominable practices in deep and penetrating missives to the national psyche.

They addressed the morality of condoning these wicked traditions without any

pulling punches. In time, many of these practices were outlawed both by the colonial British overlords, and subsequently by Indian Law. Yet these practices not only persist, but in places like Junagarh, they thrive.

While searching for the roots of these traditions, numerous sources, which were based on authenticated evidences and historical proofs, were analyzed. There is good evidence that the original people of the Indus river basin were ethnically different from the invading Aryans. It is felt that the invaders were of Mediterranean background, specifically, the Mittanis and Hittites of Asia Minor. These invaders neither came as a large army, nor all at once. The subjugation of the native peoples of the Indus land likely occurred over generations, with periodic violence. The invaders, while racially similar, were of many tribes and tongues. Among them were a calf-worshipping, nomadic people who came from the Palestinian region, and called themselves Brahmins. It is postulated that this small group eventually gained control of the larger Indian population by devising a caste system of privilege, which simultaneously denigrated the native peoples and maintained the Brahmin's political dominance in the most unlikely of scenarios. This is not a new concept historically, as epitomized by the Sunni dominance of the Shia in Iraq. However, the legalization of destiny as a cultural imperative, relieved only by death and rebirth is uniquely the product of Brahminicalization. This rigid cultural value system was slipped into the cultural psyche by a permissive, tolerant but finally persecuting religion developed by the Brahmins. This mind-numbingly complex religion harbors a dark soul. But it is packaged in mystery. Indeed, to this day the exotic mysticism of the Hindu religion continues to appeal to people, even of the Western world.

The factor that eventually leads to the cultural phenomena is that the Hindu religion codified a way of life. State, religion and lifestyle became one and the same, from one corner of India to the other. It locked into place the destiny of entire races of

peoples. In this context, the likelihood of an individual breaking free from these cultural shackles is unlikely. In places such as Junagarh, in Kalahandi, where modernity has not yet arrived, it is even more remote. Of all the subjects studied during this research, women were discovered to be the most vulnerable to oppression and persecution. In some sense, they are both currency (as demonstrated by the dowry system) and chattel. Therefore, this researcher designed, developed and executed a research platform that asked the question, "Can the Word of God free the most oppressed individuals in an oppressive culture?" These oppressive customs could not be removed by the power of democracy or the law. Only the power of God's love can set these people free. This is achieved when a person becomes aware that they are created in the image of God and therefore not born for oppression. The researcher believes that self awareness and self empowerment can be brought about in these oppressed women through the recognition that they are each individual, unique and special creations of God. When a people achieve self awareness and empowerment, they receive an idea that is stronger than the sword. It is also contagious. The researcher proposed that by gathering a small cohort of women and exposing them to God's liberating Word, those who accept the Word, would recognize their freedom. This sense of freedom can be strengthened and fostered by regular contact with mission workers. Additionally social programs focused on education and hygiene/health will increase these women's awareness.

These liberated women then may act as seed to bring Spiritual freedom to other people in bondage. In the Indian culture, a man may not easily witness or minister to a woman without fear of condemnation and retribution. Also, villagers are wary of messages from strangers. To the most oppressed, that is, women, the methodology discussed in the paragraph above may be the most effective.

The assumption of this researcher is that when one becomes self-aware and empowered, one becomes impregnated with a sense of self esteem and self worth that

is visible and undeniable. The father of the modern nation of India, Mahatma Gandhi, believed in the revolutionary power of transformational ideas changing the people around you. He led the nation to independence by the power of this simple notion. The inner transformation caused by an enlightened spirit will be perceived by others as something special. When a group of women collectively gains this outlook the community at large will take notice and ask what brought about this transformation. It is hoped that this inward change will eventually create a process of social change in attitudes and behavior, especially towards women.

The methodology is revealed in the Project Design. In Chapter Two, under Theological Framework, the researcher examined the theological justification for seeking deliverance from oppression. The researcher examined the scriptures to discover if there were any basis for oppression, and whether the oppression of women was sanctioned under any circumstance. For this purpose the areas she examined were:

- i. God on the oppression of the Israelites in Egypt.
- ii. The restraints on oppression in the Ten Commandments.
- iii. God's concern for the oppressed in the Old Testament.
- iv. God's commands for justice to the oppressed.
- v. The woman at creation.
- vi. Christ's position regarding the oppressed.
- vii. Jesus Christ and women.
- viii. The marriage mystery and command of God.
- ix. The New Testament position on oppression.
- x. The place of oppression in the Messianic Kingdom.
- xi. Women in heaven like angels.

Oppression is sanctioned nowhere in the Bible. God Almighty expressly prohibited any human from oppressing another. God is always found on the side of the

oppressed. He champions the underdog. We see his abhorrence of oppression throughout the Bible. The last five of the Ten Commandments are formulated against oppression. We always find God searching for the practice of justice and mercy among humans.

At the dawn of humanity, God created woman from man. The Bible tells of how He brought her forth from near Adam's heart. Paul speaks of submitting one to another. Jesus stressed that man must leave his parents and cleave to his wife. Yet this is not what many cultures (nor for that matter Christians) practice. The Christian tradition equates Christ with a bridegroom, and the Church with His bride. This reveals the sanctity of the wedding vows. But not all peoples were exposed to this enlightened message.

Christ went so far as to correct the fallacies of the religious elite of His day, when they assumed there were men and women in heaven. He noted that humans would more approximate the angels in heaven. In heaven, there would be no need for the sexes. In heaven, there is neither creed nor nation, neither division nor oppression. Heaven is filled only by the holiness of God and the worshippers who adore Him. If God's will were to "be done on earth as it is in heaven," we would first need to exercise grace, mercy, love and justice. The will of God then, is to free the oppressed. Only the Word of God can free.

In Chapter 3, under Literature Review, a detailed study of the systematic oppression of women in India is undertaken. Indeed, the woman is subservient in the Indian culture, and this can be demonstrated by many of the customs of the land. And if reviewing past and present writings were not sufficient to capture the true horrors of this oppression, one need only go to a place such as Junagarh. Whether intentionally or unintentionally (by blindly following protocol), men to this day keep women subservient throughout much of the land.

The roots of this oppression lie in the Aryan-Dravidian divide. At the dawn of civilization, the non-Brahmanical Indus River people practiced social justice rooted in the Valluvar Aram. In the course of time, the Brahmanical Aryan practiced Varnasrama Dharma or social exploitation, which manifested itself through the caste system. Herein lays the tragedy of the Indian woman; that the Aryan civilization rose to subjugate the ancient Dravidian ways of justice. Had the other dominated, the status of women would indeed be different. The oppressive codes of Hinduism are rooted in the Brahmanical Vedas (scriptures created by the Brahmins) mainly from its constitution, "the Code of Manu," written by the ancient cleric Manu. An oppressive idea won out over an enlightened one. Night fell on the Indian woman for millennia.

To prove that the oppressive practices noted in literature are not extinct one need only visit any rural village in India today. Junagarh provided plenty of opportunity. Many of the subjects studied were directly affected. Indeed, many were victims of child marriage or enforced labor. Here, as elsewhere, female infanticide, dowry, and solitary widowhood are accepted ways of life. Only Sati has become rare. Temple prostitution is also not as common in Junagarh.

There are some practices that are more common in one socioeconomic class than others. For example, bride torture for dowry, sati and widow persecution is often found among the more well-to-do. Whether the poor are more humane has not been established. There is more of a sense of permissiveness among the down-trodden, perhaps a notion of "live and let live." However, the oppression of the landless laborer by the well-heeled land owner approaches the level of feudalism. Any transgression of protocol by the lower caste is swiftly punished by the higher castes, and the retribution can be harsh.

It is in the interest of the higher castes that the subjugated castes remain submissive. Any message that may empower the lower castes is quickly and harshly

dealt with. Christian missionizing is a serious threat to the system, as it affects the order of things more than the mere act of changing faiths. Of all religions, Christianity is most hated in these parts due to its power to upset the social system that has been enshrined for millennia. Throughout India, there are strict anti-proselytizing laws aimed at Christian activity. It was not far from here that an Australian Missionary and his young sons were burned to death while sleeping in their van during a missionary trip. Hinduism, which on its face is “tolerant,” has recently become intolerant of monotheistic faiths. The nationalistic government, headed by the likes of the BJP (Indian People’s Party) is at the vanguard of an attempt to bring back the old ways (including, in some cases, sati) and resist the forces of change. Such platforms are most especially intolerant of Christians and are xenophobic towards “the outsider’s ways and faiths.”

Chapter IV assesses the validity of the assumption by putting the question directly to the subjects of this study. The main tool used for this assessment was a questionnaire developed by the researcher. While the sample size was small (due to the lack of time afforded for this paper – an in-depth study would take years), the cohort was representative of the lower castes, which is assumed to have the double oppression of culture and poverty.

The women in the group displayed a sense of awareness that their order in society was low, but not abased. They had a sense of dignity within the confines of their routines, but not of self worth. These women felt it was their destiny to suffer as they do, particularly their lot as women. They were locked into their fate at birth. Some felt that in the next life they would have the good fortune of being born male, hopefully a Brahmin male. However, in the current context, they had to accept their fate. It was *fait accompli*. In this sense (of being ‘locked in’) they demonstrated a lack of self awareness and self empowerment.



Over the course of four weeks, prior to intervention, a chosen group of women were observed closely to study daily routines and social influences. It was noted that there was no change in their daily routine and social patterns from one day to the next. The next four weeks was spent in individual counseling by a team of evangelical workers who led them to an awareness of environmental hygiene, spiritual health, mental health and physical health. The women found confidence in helping their villages with issues pertaining to hygiene and environmental problems. These women were greatly encouraged by their mutual experiences when they had an opportunity to share their views pertaining to the questionnaires. Most of the women had no experience in Christ. However, the few who did continued to practice the rituals of their former religion. This was due to the confinement of their circumstances. There were expectations from families and the society which, if ignored, could bring dire consequences to the women. However, their revelation of the inner freedom they had experienced in Christ provoked curiosity and enthusiasm in this transformative power among the other women.

The final four months consisted of church ministry which started with a week of revival programs which centered on preaching of the word on the Love of God, and His healing grace. Other activities included a deliverance ministry, Bible classes, question and answer sessions and special prayers. A real spiritual movement was begun among the women. The work of the Holy Spirit was evident. In addition to the initial intervention group, a general outreach to the community was begun. For three months, the focus of the sermon programs in the church was on the Love of God. The initial revival week began a spark that kept adding membership to the church. Intercessory Prayer Sessions for the women, Adult and Children's Sunday school classes, Adult Education and Prayer cells along with week-day meetings began a women's movement. A few men also began attending Sunday services. Though the target attendance for Sunday services was ten, the average attendance during the last four weeks of the six month

program was twenty. Starting with the intervention group, the majority of attendees were women.

Follow up assessment by questionnaire at the end of the program showed a significant improvement in spiritual awareness, empowerment and in self worth. Most of the women had come to Christ. They professed a deep and abiding change and commitment to Christ, the author of their awakened inner conscience. They planned to attend regular cottage meetings and church gatherings. The time was not sufficient to get a better sense of the ways this transformation would impact their families and villages.

As a follow up, the researcher has arranged for a regular team of evangelical workers to continue what was begun in the area. Regular debriefings with this evangelist team are planned. Plans are underway to replicate this methodology in other Northern villages. Following is the Five Year Plan prepared at the outset of the research program. Ongoing plans will be made upon evaluation of performance at the end of the first year. Below are expected methods, results, and annual growth rates.

#### **Expected Method of Achieving Annual Growth Rate**

*Table 2. Church Membership through the Program*

*Target Year-End and Expected Growth Rate*

	<b>5-31-2008</b>	<b>5-31-2009</b>	<b>5-31-2010</b>	<b>5-31-2011</b>	<b>5-31-2012</b>
<b>Annual growth</b>		100%	150%	160%	200%
<b>Annual new members</b>	10	10	15	24	48
<b>Year End Total Membership</b>	10	0	35	59	107

*Table 3. Fellowship Gatherings*

*Target Year-End and Expected Growth Rate*

	<b>5-31-2008</b>	<b>5-31-2009</b>	<b>5-31-2010</b>	<b>5-31-2011</b>	<b>5-31-2012</b>
<b>Annual growth</b>		0%	100%	100%	200%
<b>Number of fellowship gatherings at year end</b>	1	0	1	1	2
<b>Year End Total Gatherings</b>	1	1	2	3	5

*Table 4. Worship Halls*

*Target Year-End and Expected Growth Rate*

	<b>5-31-2008</b>	<b>5-31-2009</b>	<b>5-31-2010</b>	<b>5-31-2011</b>	<b>5-31-2012</b>
<b>Annual growth</b>			0%	100%	100%
<b>Number of church buildings at year end</b>	0	1	0	1	1
<b>Year End Total</b>	0	1	1	2	3

### **Conclusion**

It has been said that the Indian woman is a victim of oppression, from the womb to the grave. This is certainly true in the author's awareness as documented in the abundant literature reviewed, as well as through personal experience and during the course of ministry. The roots of this oppression were explored in this paper. After generations, social order becomes religion, religion becomes custom, and custom becomes the hope of salvation. At the outset, for the study subjects, the only hope of deliverance was death. With death comes escape to new possibilities. The whole

concept of death and rebirth is not fixed on the hope of a beautiful death, but a beautiful rebirth. By managing the expectation that doing a good job of a bad deal brings hope of better times in the next life, the higher castes live off the back of lower castes in this life. But more than any other, women are the beasts of burden. It would almost seem that the entire social construct is borne by women. Thus, if there truly were justice, men would be reborn as women, and women would go on to become demigods by the fact that they are the lynchpins of the family, and by extension, of the society. Alas, here is evidence of a patriarchal society gone amok. To the woman, hope in this life is dead. Unfortunately, over eons, even women believe that this is the order of things. Therefore, changing expectations is a tall order. However, the grace of God overcomes all obstacles, and there is no challenge too large. This was true in Kalahandi. An impressive transformation among the women occurred when they were exposed to the gospel of Christ. This exposure creates an awareness of the women's inner worth; that she is already as worthy as any other human being, male or female. The transformative power of ideas and knowledge is suppressed in women by denying them education. This then is the missionary's first step. This knowledge can be in the form of personal contact, conventions, or small and large gatherings. There is a hunger for something uplifting and encouraging in a downtrodden people. In the end, not even the entrenched customs that have endured for centuries can prevent God's grace from lifting up the oppressed and shining light to those who sit in darkness. The women themselves will act as torchbearers to each other, if only someone would make the initial investment to break the cycle of oppression.

## **Recommendations**

As noted above, once a movement has gotten under way, it gathers strength like a mighty river and change is inevitable. This researcher's recommendations for change are:

- i. Understand well the culture and prevailing forces influencing a people before you seek to minister to them: do your homework beforehand.
- ii. A people's routines and social patterns must be understood well.
- iii. Identify people's inherent weaknesses/deficiencies in order to strengthen and uplift them.
- iv. Be resourceful in identifying and managing people's expectations.
- v. The solution to spiritual dilemma often lies in educating them to their current state.
- vi. When targeting spiritual outcomes, have defined goals and parameters of expectations, including a timeframe.
- vii. Use a multi-prong approach to ministry. Use literature, individual contact, group contact, prayer cells, etc: orient the ministry to the group you are trying to reach, by using multiple modalities that are effective on the target group.
- viii. Gathering voluntary service often engenders greater enthusiasm.
- ix. Understand the type of spiritual service that is most necessary or desired at a given place. For example, in India, prophetic ministries, healing ministries, exorcisms and the like are highly effective, given the psyche and the spiritual need of the people.
- x. Use care and empathy, as a Shepherd would with his sheep.

This thesis project revisits the traditional model of male evangelists, especially of foreign birth, ministering to the most oppressed of India's people, its women. Today's

Indian climate is a tinderbox of nationalism, revived Hinduism, intolerance of “foreign” religions and anti-proselytizing. This climate mandates a different approach to ministering to India’s women. This researcher has revealed how that approach may take place.

Using a ‘seed’ group of local ministers (ideally women), and taking a village by village approach, a small cohort of ideologically ‘liberal’ village women can be cleaved from oppressive religious beliefs by supplanting them with Christ’s call to liberty and freedom from Law and Custom. These women, being of the people, have a greater standing in the community than missionaries. Peace and contentment have an infectious quality. Most oppressed women have neither of these qualities. A villager who truly acquires Christ has both. Curiosity, and observation of a joyous lifestyle hopefully create a climate for greater acceptance of this new faith among a people notoriously hostile to the gospel and this may cause a social transformation.

This transformation can be sped up by introducing awareness of social issues such as education and health. Of course, one could offer this program in reverse, starting with social reform and introducing spiritual reform. Either way, God is served by spreading the gospel as well as imparting social justice to a people long oppressed, as explored in chapter 2.

In a sense, this thesis advocates going back to the past to get to the future of missions in India. This approach was famously summed up in the phrase “soap, soup, salvation.” It was practiced by the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century evangelists in India. However, most of the practitioners were men ministering to men. We propose a woman-reaching-out-to-woman approach.

The Indian nation is in desperate need for a woman’s Christian outreach program. While taking on a grassroots approach, it will need a larger group’s organizational skill to implement. This researcher has piloted just such an approach and

plans to franchise it to other remote villages. She also proposes setting up a Christian Leadership Training program to train the 'seed' cohort of ministers, who while toiling in adverse circumstances, will have the sensitivity, creativity and tenacity required to launch a woman's grassroots Christian movement in India.

While a Billy Graham type crusade is sure to run into resistance, a Pauline approach of house to house ministry will certainly have greater success. Our goal is to generate the next generation of Pauls, especially of the female persuasion. That is a process still in development, involving the Christian Leadership Training mentioned before.

Finally, the ten changes recommended above help bring sensitivity to local issues. In the end, all missions are local, and it is incumbent on every minister to understand what the local issues are. Failure to heed this will surely cause one to end up in a situation similar to that encountered in the fictional book "The Poisonwood Bible" by Barbara Kingsolver (2003). That situation entails insensitivity to local custom that may create the sense in a community that the message or messenger is at best arrogant, and at worst assaults local traditions.

For a Christian, as in all things, it is critical to seek God's will prior to any endeavor. Only God reveals His holy light to any people. The messenger must bring his message to the right people. I pray for willing instruments in the hands of God to the oppressed women of India.

## **APPENDIX 1 - Questionnaire to Evaluate Discontentment in the Intervention Group**

### **Appendix 1a: Discouragement about Growth Potentials**

1. Have you been encouraged in every aspect of your life by your family?
2. Have you felt that your family or society did not encourage you with your growth potential in a way that you had hoped?
3. In which area of life do you feel you are discouraged?
4. Did you ever want to go to school and study?
5. How does discouragement from education by your own make you feel?

### **Appendix 1b: Discrimination within the Family**

1. Were you at any time treated differently than your brothers?
2. What do you think was the reason for that?
3. Did you ever regret being born a woman?
4. Why was that?
5. Have you ever resented a perceived inequality? What were those circumstances?
6. Did you do anything when you felt you were not treated with equal status in your family?
7. Have you been subjected to hard labor? At what age did you begin?



8. Have you at any time felt that you were oppressed because you are a woman?
9. Did you ever hope for deliverance from this inequality?
10. Who is the most respectable person in your family?
11. Why?
12. Who is the 2<sup>nd</sup> most respectable?
13. Why?
14. What is your place in your family?
15. Do you approve of it?

#### **Appendix 1c: Physical and Mental Oppression**

1. Have you suffered physical or mental oppression? Which more so?
2. What kinds of physical oppression are unacceptable to you? What kind would you accept?
3. What do you feel are the reasons for this oppression?
4. What kind of mental oppression did you suffer by your husband or a family member?
5. How did you manage those occasions when you were oppressed?
6. How did you feel when you were mentally oppressed?

7. Have you ever felt like ending your life?
8. How?

#### **Appendix 1d: Selective Sex Discriminations**

1. Have you heard of people aborting female fetuses in your neighborhood?
2. How do you feel about female infanticide and feticide?
3. Have you heard about the killing or selling of female children in your neighborhood?
4. How do you feel about that?
5. At what age did you get married?
6. Are you comfortable with child marriage?
7. At what age do most girls get married in this area?

#### **Appendix 1e: The Experience of Widows**

1. How is a widow treated in your neighborhood after her husband dies?
2. How do you feel about it?

#### **Appendix 1f: Individual Member's Suggestions for Improvement**

1. What changes would you suggest making in these areas?
2. How would you propose improving the educational condition of women?

3. What would you propose to improve the spiritual condition of women?
4. What would you propose to improve the social status of women?

## **APPENDIX 2 - Questionnaire to Evaluate Self-Esteem in the Intervention Group**

1. Did you ever have menial jobs that you felt were demeaning?
2. What was status of the families you did this for?
3. How did you feel about these jobs? Were you ashamed?
4. What did you do to overcome feelings of shame?
5. Did you ever feel this kind of work could be considered oppression?
6. Have you ever had to go for hard manual work?
7. What kind?
8. How often?
9. Have you ever felt that you are not given your due respect when regarding the men folk in your family?
10. Are you proud of yourself?
11. How do you feel about yourself?
12. Would you accept your daughters having the same life as yourself?
13. Why?
14. What would you want your daughters to be?

15. What will you do to improve the status of your daughters?
16. What level of self esteem do you think that women here generally have?
17. What would you propose to improve this?

### **APPENDIX 3 - Questionnaire to Evaluate Self-Worth in the Intervention Group**

1. Did you want to go to school and study when you were a child?
2. What forced you into hard labor?
3. Have you assumed you might have lived a better life?
4. Did you try to improve your condition in the society?
5. How?
6. Who is the breadwinner in your family?
7. Had you hoped to be doing a better job than what you are doing now?
8. What sources may have helped you improve your lot in life?
9. Are you proud of your achievements?
10. How? Would you mind explaining?
11. What do you think is the status of women's self worth locally?
12. How would you propose to lift up a women's status to be equal with a man's?
13. Do you believe that you can now improve your status? How?

## **APPENDIX 4 - Questionnaire to Evaluate Spiritual Needs in the Intervention**

### **Group**

1. What kind of freedom do you have in your family to worship?
2. Why?
3. What is the normal form of worship in your family?
4. What is your place in religious activities in the family?
5. Are you happy about this position?
6. Who holds the chief position in the worship?
7. Why?
8. What did you/ do you believe is the condition of a woman's life after death?
9. What is your family's belief about the same?
10. How long have you been in the Christian faith?
11. Why do you believe in Jesus Christ?
12. Have you accepted Him as your Lord and Personal Savior?
13. What is special about Jesus that is different from your old faith?
14. Do you feel you have enough freedom to worship in Christ?

15. How long might you remain a Christian?
16. What if your family and society persecute you because you became a Christian?
17. What would you propose for the spiritual independence of woman



**APPENDIX 5 - Follow-up Questionnaire to Evaluate Self-Empowerment, Self-Esteem, Self-Worth, Spiritual Awareness and Empowerment in the Intervention Group**

**Appendix 5a: Self Empowerment**

1. What did you achieve after joining the Intervention Group?
2. How would you assess your difference before June/07 and now?
3. How do you feel now after learning the Love of the Living God for women?
4. Do you think you can treat your daughters and daughters-in-law equally with men now?
5. How would you handle the inequality between men and women now than before?
6. Do you want your daughters to be married before 18 years of age?
7. What would you do to remove the oppression of women from the society through child marriage, female feticide, female child killing and selling and dowry torture etc.?
8. What kind of change you want to bring to the women in your family and in your society?
9. Being a Christian how would you lift up the social status of women in Junagarh?
10. What would you do to stand on your own with finances and other aspects of life?

#### **Appendix 5b: Self-Esteem**

1. Do you respect yourself now?
2. Do you think others look at you with respect?
3. What would you do to uplift women's status in the society?
4. What would you do to remove the present poor self image of women in your community?

#### **Appendix 5c: Self-Worth**

1. How do you feel about yourself as a breadwinner or mother in the family?
2. Would you like to take responsibility equal with man?
3. How can you help women feel the worth of their existence?
4. What difference do you see in yourself after you started attending Christian fellowship?
5. How do you see your own status in the society?

#### **Appendix 5d: Spiritual Awareness and Empowerment**

1. Do you find any difference between temple worship and Christian worship?
2. Have you accepted Jesus Christ as your Lord and Personal Savior?
3. What difference have you found in Christ Jesus?
4. How would you manage the rejection and resistance your people show towards Christians?
5. How would you lead other women from religious darkness to the marvelous light in Christ?

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## VITA

Glory Fields Bell Isaac, Palisades, NY, was born on a leap year on February 29, 1944 in the village of Edaicode in the Kanyakumari District of Tamil Nadu, India. She was born to Evangelist Vedakkan Appallose and Daisy Appallose. After finishing high school, she went on to obtain her Registered Nurse (RN) license in 1966. On January 10, 1968, she married Rev. Dr. Jacob P. Isaac, the Founder and President of the Soul Winning Mission (SWM) and the Soul Winning Mission Theological Seminary (SWMTS). Glory is blessed with two sons and two daughters who are professionals residing in the United States. She worked for 29 years as an RN in various capacities in India, the United States, and Saudi Arabia. During this period, Glory received the New York State Senate Nurse of Distinction award. In 1995, she joined her husband in full-time missions in India. Glory joined the first year B.Th class in the SWMTS because of her desire to study the Bible in depth and secured her B.Th degree in 2001. While working as SWM's chief administrator, Glory went on to pursue and obtain her Masters of Divinity degree in 2003 from SWMTS. From 2005 to the present, she has been working on obtaining a D.Min from the Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary. Mrs. Isaac looks forward to completing the degree work and securing her D.Min in May, 2008.